

LONDON

TO

MOSCOW

DR. MAR APREM

BOOKS BY Dr. MAR APREM

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LONDON TO MOSCOW

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LONDON TO MOSCOW

- A Travelogue -

MAR APREM

1993

LONDON TO MOSCOW

(English) Travelogue

Author :

Most Rev. Dr. MAR APREM

B. D, M. Th., S. T, M. D. Th.

**Metropolitan's Palace,
Trichur-680 001,
Kerala, INDIA.**

Copy right : Author

Date of Publication : February 1993

No. of Copies : 1000

No. of Pages : 134

Price Rs. 15 (India only)

\$ 3 (Foreign)

*Printed at
M. T. B, C. Technical Training Centre
Pallikulam Road, Trichur-680 001
Karala, India.*

*Cover Design ;
WORLD WIDE, THRISSUR-1*

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to present this book which is the 41st book written by His Grace the Most Revd. Mar Aprem, Metropolitan of the Chaldean Church of the East.

Mar Aprem is approximately my age. I am frightened of the prospect of citing Mar Aprem as an example to my son because if I were to tell my son that at his present age Mar Aprem was a Church-loving and studious type, he could retort that at my age Mar Aprem was already Metropolitan for a quarter century.

Mar Aprem is noted for a number of outstanding feathers on his cap. He is a writer of prose and poetry in languages more than one, he is a scholar in history whose original contribution to the study of history is noted in continents more than one, he is a humourist whose collection of jokes would soon be a thousand more than one, and he is a speaker, preacher and Bible-teacher who has thrilled audiences in countries more than one.

The present book describes his experiences during a few days when he travelled from London to Moscow. Knowing Mar Aprem I was looking for mischievous or witty remarks. I was not to be disappointed. Take for instance his statement, "After 12, I do not have any experience of being friendly with girls. I am not against youngsters." Whether Mar Aprem means his age or that of the girls gave food for thought. The question whether 12 denoted years or hours is potentially mischievous. As I read about the medals of George Vertanov I was reminded

of a vain socialite of Boston who used to proudly wear a medal with an inscription in Chinese. All the Boston Brahmins were duly impressed until one day when a Chinese Professor was among the guests. Proudly approaching him she asked the Professor to read and translate the inscription. The Professor looked embarrassed. Finally, after a lot of persuasion he read, "licenced prostitute of the city of Shang-Hai." I hope Vertanov's medals had no inscription whatever.

I also notice that Mar Aprem went round Kremlin seeking couples on September 13, 1992 which day, for me personally, marked the completion of living with the same room-mate for 27 years: I was married on a September 13. When the Bishop talks about marriage I am reminded of someone who stopped going to Church on that count. On being asked why he was not to be seen in church an old man replied that he had three reasons: "Firstly I do not like your music; secondly I do not like your sermons; and thirdly it was in your stupid church that I acquired my wife." When I completed 25 years as a husband somebody suggested that we may roast a Turkey, but my son intervened, saying that the poor bird did not deserve to be punished for the mistake of his parents. Mar Aprem says that in Russia 'people get married any time they want to.' I must say that it is very primitive: it is no wonder that the society went into total confusion as soon as the iron hand was removed.

As I put the book down I am reminded of my visit to Moscow way back in 1979. The city was quiet (like a cemetery), life was very orderly (as in an army camp) and while luxury was unheard of, all basic needs were provided or (like in a prison). On my return the then Chief

Minister Shri. P. K. Vasudevan Nair, who had very kindly arranged with the communists in Moscow to look after me, asked me what my impression about Russia was. I replied "Sir, if Indians go to Russia and learn about the situation there, I am afraid you would never be Chief Minister." My impression of the Soviet ruled Moscow was one of rigid camp life. Moscow today is in transit. One can only hope that after the dust settles down the city will redefine its co-ordinates and make it once more a beautiful place under the sun.

Mar Aprem has my best wishes for more journies and for more journals.

Cheerothottam, Kawdiar,
Trivandrum-695 003
March 25, 1993.

Dr. D. BABU PAUL

INTRODUCTION

My visit to England was from July 28 to September 10, 1992. Then I spent Sept 10 to 16 in Moscow. A visit to England did not call for a travelogue. I had been there in 1961-62 as a student at St. Boniface College, Warminster, Wiltshire which was the fourth year theology course of King's College, London.

This was my seventh trip to England. After the 1961-62 academic year, I visited England for a few days on my way to study in New York in 1966. While returning from New York after two years I could not stop in London, as my return to India was with stops only in Copenhagen and Bagdad.

In 1977, while returning from America and in 1983 during my trip to Germany I visited England. In 1984 and 1988 on my way to America I stopped in London just for a few days. Now during this 7th visit I got a few days more than my previous three short stop-overs.

Syriac Symposium is known to scholars of Syriac language. Although not widely publicised, it is conducted by the professors of Syriac attached to some University. It is held for the first time in England. This language is taught in Oxford and Cambridge in addition to some other universities of London, Lancaster and such.

A record of this Syriac Symposium is necessary to be written for a wider reading. The Syriac speaking Christians scattered around the world should know about this scholarly exercise done after every Olympic games, once in four years, ever since 1972.

The rich collection of Syriac manuscripts in Cambridge University Library, Mingana collection of Syriac manuscripts in Manchester and Birmingham are referred to for the information of those who should feel proud of such repositories of Knowledge, which preserved the Syriac manuscripts for the posterity.

A glimpse of the Assyrian community in Ealing and around is provided in this little book. That raises this book from the level of a mere travelogue to the status of a Church history book, updated for popular consumption. The libraries do not provide the current history of the Churches. Meeting of friends, especially those connected with Church or Syriac literature, was a part of this trip. Being a travelogue they are referred to here in brief. Gratitude to my hosts who welcomed me to their homes without any formality. As usual, I failed to express my thanks to them in many words. But I have no doubt that they know that I cherished their hospitality, as it remains warm in my heart as experienced in a smile on our faces, which are beyond many words of thanks uttered profusely.

My trip to Moscow was my first trip to the former Soviet territory. Although I had heard about Russia and the 1000-year-old Orthodox Church in that country. I never had an opportunity to visit that area. What I used to read and hear about the affairs behind the Iron Curtain, being conflicting reports, could not arrive at a convincing conclusion.

Professor Konstantin Petrovich Matyveyev is my first contact in Moscow. When I first heard of an Assyrian scholar in Moscow I decided to open correspondence with him; because of our mutual interest in Assyrian

Church History. We both belong to the same Church (Church of the East, sometimes referred to as Assyrian Church or Nestorian Church). Our field of research is somewhat the same. That made us friends. Thus even before the disintegration of the formidable Soviet Union, there were a lot of events that would interest an avid traveller like myself.

The translation of my first two joke books *Bishop's Jokes* and *Laugh with the Bishop* into the Russian language enhanced my interest to visit Moscow and see how the Russians would laugh with me and at me. The scarcity of printing paper delayed the publication of this translation.

When the Syriac Symposium was to be held in England I planned that my return trip could be routed through Moscow. I wrote to Professor Matveyev about it. He speeded up the printing of this joke book and arranged for its release in September.

Considering the cold climate after the month of September, I was keen to visit Russia in September itself. Despite the fact that the Russian visa was not possible to be arranged in India within the short time, I got my ticket booked through Moscow anticipating that the Russian visa would be available in London. I was not proved wrong in my hope.

The Russian translation of my Book *Laugh with the Bishop* was released at the Institute of Ethnography at the Academy of Science, Moscow on Tuesday 15 Sept. 1992. Prof. Valery Tishkov, Director of the Institute of Ethnography, and Minister of National Affairs, presided

over the function. The Russian translator (Prof. Konstantin Petrovich Matveyev) and myself spoke at the functions. Prof. Jury Simcenko, editor-in-chief of the series, *Peoples and culture*, expressed the wish that more books of mine be translated into the Russian language and published by the institute of Ethnography in Moscow.

Scholars and guests were present on the occasion. Roman R. Chervonstev, Vice Chairman of the Commission for the National Policy and Chairman of the Sub commission for international Relations, of the Moscow City Council stated that he would welcome closer cultural contacts between Moscow City Council and the City Council of Trichur, my hometown.

Although I left London and reached Moscow within a few hours on Sept. 8, K. P. S. Menon had to spend several days travelling by train from Delhi to Bombay and from Bombay to London in a British ship; from London to Leningrad by a Russian ship in the company of "a number of perpetually chattering Russian women" and others and from Leningrad an overnight train journey to Moscow.

Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union was in June 1955. K. P. S. Menon writes in his autobiography; "No one has ever received a more tumultuous welcome." It was during that three-week tour in the Soviet union "the Indian National Anthem was not only played but sung, for the first and only time, by some 500 full-throated Russians" during the *Swan Lake* performed in the Bolshoi Theatre.

After I completed the last chapter of this work, curiosity prompted me to read the chapter on Moscow, pages 277-295 in the excellent autobiography of K. P. S. Menon *Many Worlds Revisited* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1981). As I glanced at the conclusion of his

indefatigable and impeccable description of men and matters during his sojourn of nine years in Moscow, I was amazed by his correct conception not only of men, but also of women.

K. P. C. Menon makes the following observation about two Indian women at our embassy in Moscow. (pp. 294-295)

“.....Meera, wife of Thomas Abraham, a girl of the cloisters, reserved and introspective, too sensitive to make friends indiscriminately and yet adored by the friends she does make;.....

Among Indian women it is rare to find a blue-stockings. Yet I came across a peerless one, who shall remain nameless. Erudite and conscious of her erudition, a good linguist and a good writer, as keen on improving others as on self-improvement, obsessed with the thought that it was as much her mission as her husband's to promote the friendship between the people of India and the country in which he was working, hardworking, methodical, indefatigable, deferential to her seniors and contemptuous of her juniors, aggressively and defiantly Indian, she was one of those masterful women who should have been born as a man, seemed to regret she was not, and, in trying to be more than a woman, has almost ceased to be one.”

I am grateful to Dr. D Babu Paul IAS who had written a book in Malayalam captioned Kremlin-Berlin in 1981. The fact that he has written several books in both Malayalam and English, while carrying on very responsible top administrative positions makes him an apt person to write a “Foreword” to this book.

CHAPTER 1

London & Around

My journey to London and Moscow commenced on Thursday, Aug. 27, 1992. I left Trichur at 5.15 a. m. by car to the Cochin airport. It took two hours to cover the 80 kms distance. My 23-year-old ambassador car had a new diesel engine. It would take a few days' run to pick up speed and to give the 15 kilometers' per litre.

Twenty two minutes before the scheduled time for departure I was at the counter. I was told that I could not check-in as I was supposed to check-in at least half an hour before departure. I was eight minutes late. Another late comer asked, "What? Are you acting like the government airlines? We expect better treatment to customers from a private airline like yours."

East West Airline, a private airline, is a new comer ending the monopoly of the government domestic airlines, called *Indian Airlines*. Some foreigners make the mistake of saying that they flew to India by *Indian Airlines* from New York or London. It is not true. The international airline owned by India is *Air India*.

Finally, the other passenger who argued and I were allowed to board the flight. Our flight had its full complement; not a single seat vacant. I suppose East

West must be making good money in the Cochin-Bombay sector which always has a long waiting list. This airline is a blessing to the many passengers who used to crowd the Cochin-counter at Bombay airport.

After rest at the house of Mr. K. P. Timothy of Popular Automobiles in Bombay I reached Sahar airport for the Alitalia flight to Rome at midnight.

I saw on T V the news of an air crash. An Aeroflot passenger plane crashed at 9-30 p. m. on that day, killing 82 people. It was trying to land in Ivanovo 200 kms north east of Moscow. The crash was attributed to the heavy fog and low clouds. It occurred just 3 kms away from the airport. The plane was carrying 75 passengers and 7 crew. It was not the greatest ever tragedy in the air; but it caused concern as I was getting airborne. Fog and other bad weather conditions usually cause alarm to the passengers and is a great strain on the pilots.

I was greeted by a Catholic priest at the Bombay airport. When I enquired where he was headed to, he mentioned his name. Then I told him that I had known from the programme brochure of the Syriac Symposium that like me he too was to read a paper. Thus Fr. Thomas Koonamackal became my companion during this trip upto London.

All Alitalia flights terminate in Rome, the headquarters of the Italian airline. We stopped in Rome and changed over to the aircraft, going to London. The security at the airport was very tight. Some of us who were not either Europeans or Americans, were treated with scant courtesy. They had to be cautious because of the Arab

and Punjab terrorism. If they have any suspicion about anybody, they check their passport very carefully.

Not only terrorism, drug trafficking too causes concern. Unless the governments are alert and vigilant in the airports, there can be no check on the increasing international crimes. Rome is not only the headquarters of the Holy Father, Pope, but also the nerve-center of the under-world dons called the Mafia. Any crime can happen at any time in the airport in Rome. Therefore, the presence of guards with machine guns did not annoy me much.

It was nice to be in London again. Eshaya Chemmani, son of the late Archdeacon Rev. Isaac Ewiya of Bagdad (who died on 16 December 1975), was at the airport. I had stayed with him during previous trips also. I was taken to the Chemmani house in St. Stephen's Road in Ealing. I could not re-call whether it was the same house or not where I had stayed four years earlier. While I claimed that it was the same room where I had stayed in 1988, I was told that my proverbial memory was not good enough in this case, because I was not staying in the old house; it was a different house which looked almost identical to the old one.

In 1983, 1984 and 1988 I stayed with Eshaya Chemmani. During my first stay there his daughter Susie, who was then perhaps 3 or 4 years old, used to be friendly to me. She used to tell her cousins that I was not a priest (*Qasha*) but a bishop (*Kassi*). In 1988 when I was about to leave, she insisted that she would let me go only if I promised to visit them every year. I agreed and promised to visit her in 1989, a promise I was not

very confident that I would be able to keep. Four years flew away quickly. I was happy that I was able to keep my promise, though delayed by three years.

This time, being a grown up girl, she kept a distance from me. My credentials for being friendly with persons of all nationalities are valid only in the case of children of babysitting age. After 12, I do not have any experience of being friendly with girls. I am not against youngsters. But I never tried to be close to the guys and girls of that age group. I think parents too realise this 'estrangement' when their own children become teenagers and sometime less obedient to elders. This gradually leads to a generation gap.

The Assyrian Church affairs became a vital topic for discussion when Mr. Bahram,, A. P. Adam, Hormizd, Narsai Narsai, Abu George Dinkha, Deacon Skaria, James and others began to walk into the Eshaya home. The neighbours must have wondered what was going on in that house. What was the cause of this sudden change in the Chemmani home? There were no heated arguments in our small gatherings because all the persons mentioned above had just one view. They all belong to one school i.e., adherents of the old calendar observing Christmas on January 7. But in London the majority of the members follow the comparatively new Gregorian calendar which celebrates Christmas 13 days earlier.

Yathron Darmo from the opposite camp, came to Eshaya house to see me. He asked me whether I could recognize him. When I replied, "Yathron", he was surprised at my good memory. During my last visit four years back he had come with another friend urging me to

end the division in the Assyrian Church. I told them that it needed co-operation and understanding not only from the prelates, but also from people on both sides.

I strongly feel that it is better that we united rather than to continue to remain in the sadly divided state. I do not hesitate to go on record that I am a sincere supporter of the unity moves in the Church. Still I do not have the prophetic wisdom to predict when this unity will take place, if at all it takes place. I must acknowledge my gratitude to Yathron Darmo and his friends who accorded me a warm welcome to Assyrian congregations in Ealing in 1983; temporarily forgetting that we belonged to two different calendar groups.

The Assyrian Service

My first Assyrian service in England was thirty years ago exactly in June 1962. It was the festival of Pentecost. The evening prayer known as *Ramsha* was conducted by me. I was only a deacon and not a priest at that time. Only priests can celebrate a Qurbana or communion service. A deacon can only assist. Actually the Aramaic word *Ramsha* means evening. For evening prayer we have to use the words *Sloth d' Ramsha*, if we refer, to the prayer that is said in the evening.

"An Assyrian service is a rare event in England", reported the *Daily Telegraph* in June 1962. *Church Times* the Anglican weekly, also gave publicity to this prayer. This service was conducted at St. Barnabas Church, Ealing. Earlier Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun and his maternal uncle Mar Yosip Khananishu Metropolitan had previously conducted Qurbana in the same Church. The

Patriarch's parents and sisters were living in Ealing until they shifted their residence to America between 1958 and 60.

Deacon Basliel of Bagdad was with me that day. But he was expecting a telephone call from his son in Chicago at the time of the evening service. Hence, I had to rely on the leadership of Rabbi Aprim de Kellaitha, as we sang the prayers in two *gude* (groups). After the prayer Deacon Basliel joined us for the meeting and fellowship. Some Assyrians requested me to remain in England and serve as a priest for the scattered Assyrians. I regretted that my mission was mainly to the Church in India.

It was an ecumenical service, as members from the Chaldean Catholics, Russian Orthodox, Armenians, Anglicans and a Muslim girl too, attended the service. People from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, America, England and India were present at the service on our Pentecost day (Eastern Calendar). reminding us the cosmopolitan gathering at the first Christian Pentecost day, when St. Peter preached and 3,000 people were added to the Church (Acts. Chapter 2).

In 1983 I conducted Qurbana in an Assyrian House, in Temple Road, South Ealing. I was assisted by Deacon Bawai De Matran, maternal cousin of late Patriarch Mar Eshai Shimun. Deacon Bawai did not succeed his uncle Mar Yosip Khananeesho Metropolitan when he had passed away in July 1977, contrary to the custom of the Khananisho family. The history of the Assyrian Church cannot be written without mentioning the leading role

played by Mar Isaac Khananishu Metropolitan who consecrated two Patriarchs (Mar Benyamin Shimun in 1903 and his brother Mar Polos Shimun in April 1918) and Mar Yosip Metropolitan (Mar Isaac's nephew) who consecrated one Patriarch (Mar Eshai Shimun in June 1920).

In 1984 I was present in the same Assyrian House when Mar Narsai Metropolitan of Lebanon conducted Qurbana. On 15 August 1987 Assyrians had shifted to the newly built Marth Maryam Church, Westminster Road in Hanwell, London W. 7. When I visited London on the final Sunday of July 1988, this Church did not have any service. Some people took the precaution of changing the lock of the Church fearing that the man who had the keys of the Church might open it for me.

In 1988 there was a feeling that the new calendar group should not recognize the old calendar group. I advised the Assyrians not to create any problem on this Church closure which was only a temporary affair. The next day I met Archdeacon Yonan Yovel (my friend since I stayed in his home in Basra in 1962) at Canterbury who told me he had nothing against me but he arranged to close the Church as he did not like some Assyrians sticking to the old calendar. We departed in peace.

This time we did not want to create a quarrel on this issue. We were granted permission to do Qurbana in the Assyrian House (Club) in Temple Road, Ealing where I had conducted Qurbana in 1983. Some members worshipping in the Marth Maryam Church, Hanwell, came. About 100 people were present at the service and the breakfast that followed. Malpano Abraham Nouro of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Syria attended the service.

My sister and family were in India. But my sister's daughter Dr. Sheena George attended the service, a lone representative from the Church in India.

Deacon Skaria Pithyo Narsai was a teacher in a High School in Bagdad. In March 1990 when we met in Synod in Bagdad, he was our interpreter from English to Syriac and vice versa. Within some months after this synod and before the Kuwait problem precipitated on August 2nd, he left Bagdad and has been staying with his son in England.

I was not aware of his presence in England. Rev. Eshai Joseph of Hughson, California was requested to stop in London to assist me in Qurbana in Ealing, if he was going to Moscow. But he would not feel confident to make a long trip, as he had completed 70 years of age. Deacon Skaria did his duty of assisting at a Qurbana admirably well, although he had not served at the altar for more than 2 years.

The Anglican Church

George Carey became the Arch bishop of Canterbury in April 1991. The newspapers reported that he was the first Archbishop of Canterbury, not educated in the prestigious universities of Oxford or Cambridge. I read that he had studied in London University and had obtained B. D. degree in 1962. Since I studied at Warminster during 1961-62 where the Anglican students did their post-B. D. year prior to their ordination, I began to wonder whether he was one of the 60 odd students who were my class mates.

Unfortunately after three decades I could not recall the names of all the students in my batch, especially

since I had lost the list of students and I had no alumni newsletter from that Seminary. As a matter of fact St. Boniface College, Warminster Wiltshire, had ceased to be the post-graduate seminary of King's College, London. St. Augustine's College, Canterbury offered this course within two or three years after my return from England. Still later that programme too ceased to exist. I wrote to Archbishop Carey stating that I have included London in my foreign trip and would like to say "hello" to him in person. The warm response came from Rev. Dr. William Taylor, the Chaplain to the Archbishop on Eastern Churches.

Fr. William Taylor, is a competent person on Eastern Churches. He learned Syriac language. His doctorate was on Peter III, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch in the last century. That patriarch's connection with the Indian Church is that he had visited Kerala and had consecrated in 1875 A. D. some bishops, one of whom, Mar Gregorius of Parumala, was later recognized as the Saint in the Orthodox Syrian Church in India, the only Keralite saint so far.

William Taylor has recently become the vicar of the St. Peter's Church in Mount Park, Ealing. He invited me for tea in his parsonage and showed his Church around and promised to be of any assistance to the Assyrians in Ealing. He conveyed to me the greetings of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was too busy that week, as he had returned after his visit to the U. S. A. and was about to embark on another foreign visit within a few days. The Archbishop had entrusted him with the responsibility of conveying to him any request from me.

My reply was that I had no special intention in trying to meet him except to express fraternal greetings and a desire to personally present my books on humour, as I had done to his two predecessors, Archbishop Robert Runcie and Archbishop Donald Coggan during their visits to Kerala. I understand the present Archbishop is likely to visit Kerala in February 1994 during the famous Maramon Convention. The world-wide Anglican communion is a vast one and it will take years before the Archbishop visits all areas of his spiritual suzerainty.

Rev. Taylor took me to show the inside of the Church. This Church consecrated in 1893 A. D. is in its centenary year now. The beauty and significance of St. Peter's Church is described in the booklet which the Vicar presented to me. In the Foreword written by Sir Roy Strong in the booklet *New & Old :A History of St. Peter's Church, Mount Park, Ealing*, we read:

"It is some tribute that they were in no way deterred by this, nor by the scale and grandeur of the concept which, even in its truncated form minus ambulatory and tower, we still experience today. There is nothing mean about its design either within or without, and that to me stems from the bold geometry which from the start was the essence of the structure, the huge hipped roof embracing both nave and aisles together with the walls of fenestration that, when viewed looking west, leave one with the impression of being in some gigantic stone lantern. The west window with its subtle overlay of newfangled art nouveau rhythms unto the revived decorated style must rank as a masterpiece in its own right. In this way the Church of

S. Peter, Ealing, occupies no humble position as a monument to the last great age of church building in this country. Its history geographically records everywhere we look both its effulgence and its tragic withering."

During the hundred years of the existence of St. Peter's Church in Ealing it has several additions and renovations. It is interesting to read the booklet presented to me that various methods were used for the fund-raising. In the 1930s, the Minute book of the *War Memorial Committee* states that "various methods for raising the necessary money were discussed. It was thought that the best way would be a house to house visitation by properly accredited and discreet ladies."

Needless to say that this method is still in use in several Churches around the world. One fact cannot be disputed irrespective of the denominational differences that the amounts collected by "discreet ladies" are considerable in most of the Churches.

The current demand for women's ordination to priesthood is to be understood in the light of the indisputable role the women had played and still playing often in fund raising for the needs of Churches. Discrimination in the case of ordination cannot be tolerated. Although the Anglicans in England showed more conservative attitude than their American counterparts, finally the demand of women prevailed over men.

The news that the Church of England decided to vote in favour of ordaining women to priesthood has attracted the attention of the world even outside the ecclesiastical

circles. The *Indian Express* dated Nov 13, 1992 has the following news along with a large photo of Deacon Liz Waller, Chaplain at the London School of Economics, cheering at this welcome decision.

LONDON—The Church of England has taken the historic step of voting to allow women to become priests in a decision which has prompted threats of a schism and sounded alarm bells in the Vatican.

But the news that the 17-year battle to admit women to priest-hood had been won was greeted with cries of joy from Britain's 1,300 women deacons who threw celebration parties across the country.

Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, spiritual head of the world's 70 million Anglicans, gave his full backing to what is viewed as the most important decision since the Church of England split from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534.

Archbishop Carey, conscious of the discontent among some priests and rumblings from Rome, called for a period of calm and reflection after the vote, which was won by the narrowest margin in the General Synod, the governing body of the Church of England.

As the detailed report in the above newspaper states (which was from the Reuter news agency) the result of this voting is "a source of joy and relief", to some, but "to others it will bring anguish." It is difficult to predict at this stage whether some people will leave the Anglican

Church to create another Church or will join the Roman Catholic Church. In my opinion many Anglican priests and bishops will not welcome the suggestion to join the Roman Catholic Church as the Roman Catholic Church is reluctant to depart from the practice of clerical celibacy.

It is interesting to note the voting pattern in favour of women priests. It required two-thirds majority by all three sections in the Synod. The bishops gave 75%, the clergy 70.5% and the laity 67.3%. If one layman who voted in favour of this decision had switched his side, it would have been a tie.

While the majority in England was by two votes, the majority in Australia was reduced by half, i. e., by a single vote. The 220 member General Synod of the Anglican Church in Australia voted in favour of ordaining women to priesthood. This decision was on Saturday November 21, 1992, just ten days after the voting in England.

When I was in Sydney in August 1987 this was a live issue. It is possible that dioceses like Sydney may decide against implementing the decision of the General Synod of Australia for ordaining women.

Archbishop Keith Rayner of Melbourne, primate of Australia, told that almost 60 women would be ordained by Christmas. He does not rule out the possibility of a breakaway group on this controversial issue which agitated the minds of many Anglicans in Australia during the past two decades.

Bishop Graham Leonard, retired bishop of London, England called on the members of the Church of England

for a breakaway Church, as they could not compromise on the concept of women priests. I remember Bishop Leonard speaking in the Lambeth Conference on Aug 1, 1988 when the vote in favour of lady bishops was taken. This bishop made a passionate plea against women clergy as he believed that it was an unbiblical concept. How strange it is that the bishops think so differently about the concepts of the Holy Bible.

A Musician

Dr. Leonard Henderson is an organist who lives in Southgate, North London. He wrote the Foreword to my book *Behold the Cross of Calvary in 103 languages*. Having been an excellent organist he was interested in my song and put musical notations in four parts. During my 1988 visit to England he had come to Ealing to meet me. Now I telephoned to him and visited him in his home Southgate, North London.

Naturally his house is full of books and pianos. He played different tunes and showed me his garage, filled with books. His books are more valuable and useful to him than an automobile. He does not own a car. But he makes good use of his garage to store his precious books, some of which he acquired for a cheaper price from second-hand bookshops.

He and his wife Elizabeth took me to an Indian restaurant. When I talked to the owner he told us that he was not an Indian, but one from Bangladesh. Kerala and Bengal people are alike. "We both like fish", he said. He talked about Indian food in general and Kerala food in particular.

We enjoyed our meal in that restaurant.

Leonard Henderson and myself have several mutual friends around the world. We mentioned about some of them. He also gave me a reprint from *World Biographical Hall of Fame*, Volume Three published by Historical Preservations of America 1990. A paragraph from page 3 of this reprint is worth quoting here. It will be beneficial not only to music fans but also to every human being endowed with wider vision to be of help to humanity.

“Since music is the greatest of the arts, it is natural that organists seek to serve God in the obvious way, i. e., through the medium in which they have been endowed, music; and he would like to feel that the church organist does not succumb to religious or rather sectarian bigotry, but can thank God, the giver of the special talent, in whatever church he finds inspiration and outlet for his musical offering. He believes that the following Armenian motto could very well be emulated by churches that claim to be doing the will of the Master :

Unity in Essentials
Liberality in Unessentials
But, above all, charity in all things”

Friends & Relatives

On 7th September my sister Susheela, her husband Dr. N. V. George, their son Varkey and twin girls Papa and Maya, returned to England after a few days' sojourn in their motherland that is India. Ofcourse, those children were born in England. We went to High Wyokam, their house where I had spent some days in Aug.-Sept. 1966 on my way to New York to study.

Actually I was going to that house after 26 years. I remembered that it was there in 1966 I gave house-baptism to these children. The twins were very tiny at that time. Now they have grown. Actually one of the twins drove us that late night from High Wyckam to Rugby.

At Rugby where my brother-in-law Dr. N. V. George is working, it is my fifth visit—1977, 83, 84, 88 and now 92. I did not get much free time during the two days at Rugby. Still I telephoned to my cousin Dr. Tony Panangat. He is working in Blackpool. It is far from Rugby and hence I could not meet him personally,

It was a pleasure to talk to him after many years. I was his local guardian in Bangalore during 1964-66 when I was studying for M. Th. degree in the United Theological College and he was studying for M. B. B. S. degree in St. John's Medical College which was in a temporary shed in those initial years. Dr. Tony married an Irish girl, Anna, and settled down in England. I promised visit them in my next trip to England.

I contacted Jose Thyckadan in Luton on the telephone. In my 1988 visit I had blessed his house. This trip did not give me enough time to call on him.

Dr. O. R. Timothy and Dr. Molly Timothy are my first contacts in England. They attended my Assyrian prayer meeting in Ealing in 1962. I had been to their home in 1977. Since they live near Leeds it was not easy to visit them. I telephoned and gave them a promise that I would visit them in my next trip.

Warminster friends

I wished to contact my college mates and teachers at St. Boniface College, Warminster. I consulted the Crockford Clerical Directory to obtain their telephone numbers.

As I did not know to use computer catalogues of books when we went to the library at Rugby, my sister helped me to find the book I was searching for.

After I got the Crockford Clerical Directory which contains the names and addresses of all Anglican clergy in England, I thought that my problem was over. Then I had a serious hurdle to overcome. I could not easily recall the names of my fellow students in Warminster. I should know their first and last names, even if the spelling was not accurate. Simon Hoare was the only name I could remember out of sixty students who had studied with me. I found his name with his address. i. e. SKIPTON, N. Yorkshire. The telephone number (0756) 792789.

I telephoned and was told by his wife that Simon was not at home. When I told her that Simon was my class mate in Warminster, she began to chat with me. Although Simon was not married at that time she told me that she had been to Warminster 30 years ago to meet her future husband.

Later when Simon came home he called back and told me that he had some good photos of myself with his mother as I had visited his home years ago. He said that he remembered the three points, I preached that day 30 years ago. Oh, boy, I confessed that I did not recall even the topic of my sermon after three decades. He told me that one of our class mates David Bonser was a Bishop now, probably the only one from our class who had become a bishop in England. We hoped that we would meet each other in my next trip.

Our Chaplain in Warminster, Fr. George Hacker, has become the Bishop in Penrith, Cumbria. I had difficulty in getting connected to him as the telephone number had changed. Finally I got him connected and was pleased to hear his voice "George Hacker." When I said, "I am Mar Aprem from India formerly George Mookan, your student 30 years ago", in came his delighted words, "George". He was happy to hear my voice after a long time, yes, thirty years. We talked for a long time. His wife told him, "Tell him, that you are married." When he was teaching us I was 21 and he was 36, and a bachelor. Now he must be 66. He told me that his diocese has spiritual bond with the diocese of Madras in South India which was ruled by British bishops, the last of which was Leslie Newbigin; who attained international fame as a scholar and an ecumenist. The present incumbent in Madras, Bishop M. Azariah, was with me in the USA under the Episcopal Church Scholarship programme.

Since Cumbria is up in the North of England, it was not easy for me to visit him. I promised a future visit. I enquired about the warden and Sub warden, his colleagues at Warminster.

Fr. John Townroe, the warden, remained in Warminster even after the St. Boniface College programme shifted from there to Canterbury. I was hesitating to telephone to him fearing that I would be troubling him in his old age. I was under the wrong impression that he must be very old. But Bishop George Haecker had corrected my wrong notion and according to the *Crockford Clerical Directory* he must be only 72 years old. When I dialled 0955-212355, warden's voice was heard from the other

side. When I introduced myself to him, and said that I was his student, he replied, "Oh, George that was many years ago."

When I told my beloved Warden that I could not contact any of my class mates except Simon Hoare whose name was the only one I could recall, Fr. Townroe told me that when I would visit Warminster, perhaps he could arrange a get-together of my class mates in that area. This year would have been an appropriate time for a "30 year Re-union" of the 1961-62 class of Warminster. But there was no time for such a visit. I promised to find time for such a visit in my next trip.

Fr. Sam Cutt was the Sub Warden. He used to give me some private tuition in Greek. He was a scholar. I telephoned to him twice to Wells, Somerset where he lives now. But nobody was answering his phone. He must have gone for his evening stroll. A visit to him will be on the agenda during my next visit to England.

With the help of the *Crockford's* I traced the phone number of Bishop David Wilcox, who had become the Suffragan bishop in Guildford, Surrey. He too was out of station for a few days. I would have visited him as he was close to London. He was professor in the United Theological College, Bangalore when I was a student there for M. Th. during 1964-66. He had helped me correcting the English translation of the Liturgy of Adhai and Mari which was published in 1967 when my name was still George Mookken.

As I write this travelogue I came across the obituary of a former chaplain of St. Boniface College, Warminster.

Frederick. Henry Amphlett Micklewright who died in January 1992 aged 83 years, had a short stint of one year as the Chaplain in St. Boniface College during the year 1936-37. C. B. Moss was the Vice Principal then. As these two clergymen were at war with each other at Warminster, C. B. Moss in later years used to entertain his friends with a long humorous ballad he had composed, sung to the tune of 'The Lincolnshire Poacher.' Sadly only the following verse is remembered.

“The next alight of Micklewright
And that was number seven,
He told his Principal to go
To not exactly heaven.....”

Although it is beside the point, this chaplain of Warminster did wander from denomination to denomination. He maybe one of the rare characters which we occasionally come across in the ecclesiastical circles. Although C. B. Moss could sing only of his seventh “alight”, Micklewright had many more adventures in the ecumenical pastures.

After Warminster he had two more curacies, two years each, when he resigned the Anglican ministry in 1941. He served as a Unitarian minister and later as an activist for the cause of the Labour party in “dragging out salacious scandals in the ancestry of the Conservative candidate.” In 1949 he was readmitted to the Anglican Church. In 1955 he had a quarrel with Bishop Eastaugh of Kensington over the allegations of financial irregularity. This led to the final breach with the Anglican Church. His obituary writer remarks, “Micklewright is said to have flung his clerical collar on the bishop’s desk and thereafter his rambling house in South Norwood Hill was

known as "Bishop's folly." At the time of this second quitting, Micklewright was the parish priest at St. Thomas Church, Shepherd's Bush. (No connection with Burning Bush or George Bush)

Becoming an ex-priest in 1955 Micklewright got trained as barrister, but never entered into practice. He took his Ph. D. in London. He wrote articles against the Roman Catholics such as "I indict the Papists." Surprising, enough he later became a teacher at the Sacred Heart Convent at Camberwell. Finally, his former colleagues heard the news of his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church with a "mixture of hilarity and incredulity."

My readers will pardon my above digression realising my interest in whimsical events in Church History.

B. C. C. I.

Some of my Assyrian friends in England were affected by the crash of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. The B. C. C. I. is a sad word to the Asian investors in England. Most of the Asians and Muslims who invested money in BCCI lost heavily. The B. C. C. I. was founded in 1972 by Agha Hasan Abadi, a Pakistan banker. Soon he found funds from Arab rulers. Already in 1978 the Bank of England refused BCCI, a full banking license. Yet in the period 1980-84 BCCI flourished in the third World.

In April 1990 Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi stepped in to avoid a financial crisis. Thus operations of BCCI shifted to Abu Dhabi. In 1991 the fraud of BCCI was

proved. On July 5, 1991 Bank of England shut down the BCCI. On November 15, 1991 the founder Abedi and an associate Naqvi were indicted by the US government for fraud. On July 1, 1992 Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz, a BCCI associate, was indicted in New York for fraud. Many millions of pounds are frozen as a result of this fraud. The general economic recession along with the BCCI crash made many Asians feel that the roof had come crashing in on them.

The report submitted by Sir Thomas Bingham, the second most-senior judge in the U. K. after the Lord Chancellor, makes a scathing attack on the Bank of England for its failure in discharging its task of supervising BCCI. The report published on October 24, 1992 speaks of the founder of the BCCI, Aga Hasan Abedi of Pakistan as one debited with "an inordinate endowment of low cunning, manifested in many ways and not least in his assiduous cultivation of those who by virtue of their wealth or position could be used to his advantage." About the BCCI promoter Sheikh Zayed, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, the Bingham report remarks:

"The Abu Dhabi authorities are not untutored innocents in the world of international finance, and I cannot think they were as greatly deceived as they suggest. '

The report has triggered off demands for compensation from British government, to the innocent victims of this financial fraud. But since the number of depositors in the U. K. is one hundred and twenty thousand, the Government would not yield to such demands, however reasonable they may be.

I realised that my 12-day stay in England was too short. I had many friends among the Assyrians and the English not to mention the Indians. I had an ambition to go through the Mingana collection of Syriac Manuscripts in Manchester and Birmingham. In addition to this I realised that travelling expense had gone up in England, compared to what existed 30 years ago when I was a student. If I calculate that each British Pound is a little more than 50 Indian rupees, I would give up my ambition to travel around and visit friends. For those who are working in India and earning in Indian rupees, travelling in England will be an unpleasant proposition.

CHAPTER 2

Syriac Symposium

The 6th Syriac Symposium was held at the Cambridge University from Aug. 29 to Sept. 2, 1992. It was held for the first time in England. Cambridge is one of the centres renowned for Syriac studies for many years. The Cambridge University library is famous for Syriac manuscripts like the Bodleian library in Oxford and the British library in London. This was the first opportunity for many delegates to go to Cambridge, or to England even. To me it was a second visit. I had spent a few days in Cambridge during my studies in Warminster, Wiltshire in 1961-1962.

Cambridge University gives a prominent place for the study of theology. Many brilliant students choose to study theology. The information leaflet captioned *Theology and Religious Studies at Cambridge*. p3 refers to the importance of theology courses at Cambridge.

“Because it is so vital for an understanding not merely of the question of God, but of the world we live in and the people we share it with, Theology is one of the most exciting and rewarding of all University courses. It is a multi-disciplinary subject, involving many different academic activities. Theologians study sacred texts such as the Jewish

and Christian Bibles or the sacred books of Hindus and Buddhists."

Students from various Christian beliefs and non-belief study here; for "Cambridge provides training in a range of skills and an insight into one of the most fascinating of all human quests." About the unique place of this University we read in p. 7 of this booklet.

"Cambridge is one of the most famous universities in the world. Though the university itself is large, its Colleges are comfortingly 'human-sized' communities. Some of these are many centuries and some only a few years old, but all of them are buzzing with cultural, religious, sporting and social activities of every kind. The College and University buildings are clustered round the river Cam in one of the most beautiful academic settings in the world. As a place to live, Cambridge is magic."

Cambridge is the place where Newton formulated the theory of gravitation. The atom was first split there. Erasmus, the wittiest and the wisest medieval scholar, taught New Testament here. The leading biblical scholars of the 19th and early 20th centuries such as Westcott and Hort, Lightfoot and Dodd were professors at Cambridge. Famous religious scholars F. D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley to Archbishop Michael Ramsey and C. S. Lewis had taught at Cambridge.

Cambridge prepares people not only to become priests or parsons in the Church, but also to a wide range of vocations. In p. 13 of the above quoted booklet we read.

“In addition to priests, ministers and social workers, recent Cambridge graduates include a professor of Politics, a number of merchant bankers, the headmistress of an inter-denominational comprehensive school, television and radio producers, a Guards Officer, solicitors, psychotherapists and the editor of the fashionable magazine Harper and Queens.”

Such varied professions are possible because the students of theology at Cambridge “learn to think vigorously and clearly, to explore beneath the mere surface of language and ideas, to assess historical and textual evidence, to weigh to human motivation.” As a matter of fact I was personally surprised to see that an expensive and attractive booklet had to be prepared to attract students to Cambridge which does not require such propaganda, as it has already established its international reputation.

St. Catharine's College in Cambridge was the place we were to stay. Since Cambridge is an expensive place I was thinking of staying in some home in London and attend the sessions daily. But my Assyrian friend's home in Ealing is far. It would take four hours to go to and fro daily. In unpredictable bad weather and heavy traffic in London it would take more time than two hours to go from Ealing to Cambridge. Moreover, my Assyrian friends would not let me go without the escort of at least two or three people. That would be waste of time for several people. Finally it was decided that I should stay in Cambridge throughout the sessions of the Syriac Symposium.

The St. Catherine's College is the home of the Master and resident Fellows and the principal work-place of

its senior members during the whole year. It is well maintained. The College bed-makers clean and tidy each room and make up the bed. Bed linens are changed and clean towels are provided.

Security is strictly observed. The rooms are to be locked always. The Front Door and all other entrances and exits are locked at 11.45 p. m. and open only at 6 a. m. Those who expected to return at these unholy hours were advised to obtain a front door key from the organisers of the Conference.

Waitress service was provided for dinner each night. For breakfast and lunch we were given the freedom to pick up and eat anything as much as we wished, but only at the specified time. The breakfast was from 7.45 to 9 and lunch was from 12 to 1.30 p. m.

Food was good. Cooking was tasty. As I do not eat meat since my consecration as bishop in Sept. 1968, vegetarian substitutes were provided. In buffet-food there was plenty of choice to satisfy even a diabetic patient like me.

The tea-break during this conference was an unpleasant experience to some of us. The first day the delegates were so happy to get out of the class room for tea. As we could not find any dining hall in the Dept of Divinity where we were having all our sessions, we went down. But no trace of tea or coffee. Somebody had the audacity to demand tea during the tea break, but we were told that it was only a tea break. This golden opportunity was provided to everybody who was willing to buy coffee or tea. The organizers of the Symposium

i. e., the Cambridge dons, do not provide the tea. They only provide the interval for those who want to avail themselves to purchase tea and coffee that are available in the shops in the neighbourhood. Perhaps the Cambridge scholars make their intellectual exercises over a cup of coffee in those shops.

The Indian delegates stood there as they were in a hunger-strike. Most of us did not care to go and buy coffee. Not that we did not have half a pound (Rs. 25 is indeed a big amount from Indian standards), but some of the delegates could not stomach the idea of paying for coffee. We never heard of such a situation in any conference. Ofcourse with half a pound we could purchase 25 cups of coffee in India, instead of one cup.

Dr. Sebastian Brock, who teaches Syriac language in Oxford, and an internationally known scholar in the field of Syriac studies, was there to inaugurate the Symposium. It was a pleasure to meet him again as I did in the three previous Symposiums in 1980, 84 and 88. He had been to Kottayam and to the Metropolitan's Palace in Trichur. He was happy to meet me.

According to Professor Brock the offset reprint of *Thurgama* and *Sogiatha* which we did in Trichur is a good work. It had been originally printed in Mosul, Iraq by the late Deacon (later priest) Joseph Kellaitha in 1924 and 1926. Both books were bound into one book and we re-printed it in the same manner, in 1992.

Dr. Chip Coakley teaches Syriac in Lancaster University in England. My association with him began with 1980 Symposium in Goslar, Germany. Later he wrote the

foreword to my book *Teach Yourself Aramaic* which is going to be reprinted by offset machine soon in Trichur. He was interested in my studies on the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrians, because he himself was engaged in a similar study.

His book was recently published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford. I was impressed by the get-up of the well printed book. The title of the book is *The Church of the East and the Church of England*. It has 422 pages. The cost (£45) is a little high even by English standards. I calculated £45 as Rs. 2250 in India and therefore decided not to buy. I glanced through the book and was happy to learn that it is a very useful book. Later I told our Church members in London that if they bought a copy perhaps I could get a xerox copy.

As an author myself I should not propagate such plans. Yet, I may be pardoned of this offence because I had no commercial motive, but a desire to read through a book which otherwise will not be available anywhere in India. Those living in England could have access to this book in any of the important libraries. The spiralling cost of books is a serious problem.

I thought that I detected one error in that book. I told Dr. Coakley that the distance between Ernakulam and Trichur, my hometown, recorded as 60 miles in this book could not be correct. It is 45 miles or 75 kms. It embarrassed Dr. Coakley and he could not recall from where he had got '60' miles. Although I made an emphatic statement that 60 miles was definitely an error, now I think that perhaps he was right. The present 45 mile route is after bridges were built and new straight

roads were constructed. When the late Mar Abimalek Timotheus Metropolitan came to Trichur in the first decade of this century to which Dr. Coakley comments, there was a ferry to cross. Therefore I do not dare say now that the 60-mile remark is an error or not.

A Syriac Amulet is the name of a small booklet which The Jericho Press owned and operated by Dr. Coakley produced in 1992. I said 'owned and operated' because I got an impression that he himself is the type-setter and printer. Dr. Coakley acquired these Syriac types from Cambridge University Press in 1987. I think now there is no demand for letter Press. Syriac too is printed with the help of computers.

The book *A Syriac Amulet* was edited and translated by Professor Erica C. D. Hunter of Cambridge University. She used the Syriac manuscript which is in the John Rylands Library in Manchester. The importance of an amulet for an Assyrian is evident from the first para in this booklet which is reproduced below:

"Amulets were part of the daily life of the Assyrian Christians in the nineteenth century. They were used in situations from the curing of sickness to the blessing of crops, from protection in childbirth to assistance in feuds. In a society where weapons assumed a major role, it is not surprising that amulets such as this one were formulated to keep their perils at bay."

The Assyrian priests used to write an amulet on the spot. The booklet deals with an amulet which is used for "the binding of guns, spears, swords, daggers and all implements of war." I do not know whether these

amulets were used in the gulf war of 1991. The amulets quotes the Psalmist. "He makes wars cease from the ends of the earth. He breaks bows and shatters lances (Psalms 46.9)."

There are many old friends with whom I had made acquaintance in the previous symposiums. But it has not been easy to keep in touch with all of them. We meet once in four years. If we see their articles in some journals we read it with interest. There is a personal touch when we read the articles or books written by our peers, whether we actually have correspondence with them or not. Sometimes we get an "off-print" of an article they write, related to the area of our interest. It would have been better to be in touch with the international scholars to grow in knowledge and to be up to date. But time and distance make it difficult to achieve this desire.

Fr. Robert Murray S. J., Rev. Dr. Lionel Wickham, Dr. Kathleen McVey from Princeton, Fr. S. G. Griffith S. J. from Washington, Professor Rafaat Ebied from Australia, Malpano Abraham Nouro from Syria, Professor Louis Abramowski from Tübingen and Dr. Hubert Kaufhold from Munich, Fr. John Sanders from Holland are some of those friends who were in my "inner circle." Many of the other delegates were also not new to me. The "inner circle" for me came into existence because they spoke English fluently and I could not talk in German or French.

The Kerala delegates were known to me except Fr. J. Mammotil from the Syro-Malankara Church. Other Kerala friends were Fr. J. Kollaparambil, Fr. Jacob

Tekkeparambil, Fr. Antony Vallavanthara C. M. I., Fr. Thomas Koonamackel, all from the Catholic Church, We had just one from the Orthodox Syrian Church, Fr. A. Johns Konatt.

The Indian contingent is weaker this time than the previous Symposium held in Louvain, Belgium in 1988. Fr. Luis Mooleveetil, Superior of O. I. C. who was with us in the previous occasions, had been shot dead while travelling in an autorikshaw in Nagpur about one year ago. Fr. E. R. Hambye, S. J. died in 1990. Though he was born in Belgium. Fr. Hambye was known as a Keralite, not only that he had taught in the Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, Kerala, but also he had learned a little Malayalam and had loved the Syrian Church in Kerala. Some of his friends used to refer to him as Mar Hambye.

The Orthodox Syrian Archbishops were present this time. We had Syrian Orthodox Archbishop from Holland during last two conferences. Mar Julius Yeshu Chichek is an avid publisher of Syriac books. He has a publishing house at the St. Ephrem der Syre-Klooster in Losser, Holland. We made friendship during last conferences of 1984 and 1988 because we were the only bearded bishops in that Symposium. This time he was not present.

Mor Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, Syria was present this time. We had a young archbishop from the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus. There was an Archbishop from Mosul, Iraq. I was meeting them for the first time. But from the ecclesiastical attire I guessed that these three were the Metropolitans from the Syrian Orthodox Church.

One of them i. e., the Archbishop of Aleppo, Syria told me "Mar Aprem, we have not met, but I know you, I have read all your books." Such words of appreciation are music to the ears of any author and a challenge to write more. Somebody in a distant land is reading my books. I was curious to know how he got access to my books. Maybe through the members of Pro-Oriente Foundation in Vienna, Austria of which he is a member or from the members of my Church in Iraq and Syria. A few of them read my books in English.

Syriac Computers are made and propagated by a young Engineer George A. Kiraz from Jerusalem who emigrated to California. Now he does his scholarly pursuits for a Ph. D. in Cambridge after taking a Master's Degree in Syriac studies in Oxford and an M. Phil. in Computer Speech and Language Processing in Cambridge. He presented his paper "Automatic Concordance generation of Syriac Texts. It is technical to a layman like me to understand computer terminology.

He talked about the SEDRA Database. By SEDRA he meant Syriac Electronic Data Retrieval Archive. The word *Sedra* means array or order. George Kiraz made use of the database of the Way International in the USA. Then he made Sedra II in late 1989, changing the scheme of the database to allow more information to be added. In early 1991 he made Sedra III, re-designing the database in a network module.

Currently Sedra III contains 2050 Root records, 3539 lexical records, 31,079 word records, 6337 English records, 174 Origin records and 102 Note records. The

texts are Old Syriac Gospels S and C, Syriac New Testament (BFBS edition) H Gospels (Ms-Vat Syr. 268).

Concordance to the Syriac New Testament in six volumes is the project which George Kiraz is engaged in. It is being published by E. J. Brill in Leiden. This book has been hailed as a "triple landmark in the history of Syriac studies" by Dr. Sebastian Brock of Oxford, England. Professor Brock states:

"It is a notable feature of this concordance that it has been designed so that it will be of service, not only to scholars, but also to the clergy and laity of all the Syriac Churches—Syrian Orthodox, Church of the East, Maronite, Chaldean, Syrian Catholic, Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara—for whom the Peshitta constitutes their standard traditional text of the New Testament."

The usefulness of this concordance cannot be doubted. But the price is prohibitive to Indians. The pre-publication concessional is US \$715. After Dec. 15, 1992 it rockets up to \$858. My foreign readers will think that I am unnecessarily exaggerating. But do they know that \$858 is equal to Rs. 25,000, more than a whole year's income to most of us?

My intention of writing this is not to discourage the potential buyers, but to encourage some theological library in India to find a benefactor, Indian or foreign, to purchase one set so that we in India can have an easy access to this very "essential reference tool for Syriac New Testament and for Syriac studies."

One of my Assyrian friends wanted me to know the cost of buying the computer cassette of M. L. S. and Syriac fonts prepared by George Kiraz. Concession of \$ 523 is offered to the participants of the Syriac Symposium. But my Assyrian friend tells me that the present price hike to \$1045 of this article compensates to the producer the 50% concession now offered. Anyhow I gave him the address in Santa Monica, California from where one could order the Syriac fonts made by George Kiraz. Gamma Productions in Santa Monica has distributors all over the world including Chip Software Consultants, Jayanagar, Bangalore-82 in India.

Fr. Antony Vallavanthra CMI and Fr. J. Kollaparambil told me of their intention to visit Cambridge University library which had arranged a special exhibition of Syriac Manuscripts, in connection with the visit of Syriac scholars around the globe to this University town. I joined them. We saw Bibles, Syriac Grammar and such rare manuscripts.

Pentateuch in the Peshitta version is a 16th century manuscript from our Church in Kurdistan collected by the Reverend George Percy Badger during his missionary expeditions in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in 1842-4. This Pentateuch (first five books in the Old Testament, known as the books of Moses) was in the possession of the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge (S.P.C.K.) after the Rev. Badger brought it to England. In 1887 the S. P. C. K. presented it to the Cambridge University Library along with other books.

Peshitta New Testament is another manuscript presented by the S. P. C. K. This copy in the Nestorian & Estrangela script dates back to the 11th century.

Paradaisa dha 'edhen written by Metropolitan Mar Abdisho (d, 1318) is a copy made way back in 1476 A. D. This manuscript was bought by the Cambridge University through the Rev. O. M. Parry who toured extensively in the Syrian Churches in Mesopotamia during the last century.

A lectionary from the Gospels for Sundays, Festivals copied in 1564 A. D. in Estrangelo was on display. Folio 63 is from St. Matthew. This was collected by the Rev. David Jenks when he was missionary of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission to the Assyrians from 1892 to 1899. The Collection of Syriac manuscripts was donated to his college, Pembroke in 1935. The Pembroke transferred all but one manuscript to the Cambridge University Library.

The Syriac Manuscripts collected from South India were kept in case No. 6. The first was a lectionary from the Epistles and Gospels. It is estimated to have been copied in mid 16th century. This manuscript was from the collection of the Revd. Claudius Buchanan, the British Chaplain who visited Kerala area during 1806-7. He presented it to the Cambridge University Library.

This was a Pentateuch from the Peschitta version, This has been described as "A unique mixed Nestorian hand." It dates back to the 18th century. The quires are signed variously in Syriac and Malayalam. Oo1.8 (Wright/Cook 1047).

There was a Syriac letter from Mar Dionysius Metropolitan of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Travancore written in 1821 (Or 983). One of a set of copper plates too was on display. Fr. Kollaparambil insisted to see the

original plates. The authorities brought and showed the original to us. Fr. Kollaparambil's queries did not receive satisfactory answers, as some staff members were not competent, in the history of the copper plates and how the copies were made from the original in Kerala. The plates are the blocks prepared from the original for printing. Is such a negative possible without a positive? Our conjecture was that at that time there were expert coppersmiths in Kerala who could carve letters like a negative (upside down and right to left) so that these blocks could be used for printing copies on paper.

Buchanan records the details how he had acquired copies of these copper plates. In *Christian Researches in India* p. 43 Buchanan records :

"The Christian and Jewish plates together make fourteen pages. A copy was sent in the first instance to the pundits of the Shanscret Colleges at Trichur, by the directors of the Rajah of Cochin, but they could not read the character."

I was proud to read that at that time there was a Shanscret College at Trichur, my hometown. Although the pundits could not decipher the characters, at least they were considered capable by the Maharajah of Cochin, at that time to do such an academic work.

I was disappointed that I couldn't see the "Buchanan Bible", the Syriac Bible brought by Claudius Buchanan from Kerala and preserved in the Cambridge University library. The Library staff stated that they could not show it to us. Even they have not handled it. It's pages are so brittle. Even if you touch it carefully some pages

could crumble into pieces. I told them that I had seen it 30 years ago when I had visited that library. She said that they had stopped showing it to anybody in recent years. They are trying to preserve it somehow for the posterity.

“Pencil only may be used in this room” was the written instruction displayed on the reading tables in that reading room where the rare and the archival materials were given to researchers. Unaware of this new rule I took out my pen to jote down some notes from Buchanan’s *Christian Researches in India*. Somebody noticed my pen and pointed me to the instruction on the table prohibiting the use of pen. The ink in the pens could create chemical changes on the ink used in the old manuscripts. Pencil was made available to me.

My paper in the Syriac Symposium was entitled “The codification of Canon Law by Mar Abdisho in 1290 A. D.” Some of my international friends sat in that hall to listen to my paper. Actually two sessions were going on at the same time in two different, but neighbouring halls. I preferred the sessions where papers were read in English. Those who did not know English flocked to the hall where French or German papers were read. Nobody read papers in Syriac language in the Syriac Symposium. Only English, German or French were used. All Syriac scholars knew one or two or three of these European languages.

One of the new participants was Dr. S. Zora of Chaldean Catholic Church from Iraq, who is now settled down in Birmingham, England. His Ph. D. is not in religious subjects. Still he has interest in the history of

his Church and has made scientific studies. In his paper on the Patriarchal history of the Church of the East since the twelfth century he repeated the view generally taken by the Chaldean Catholic scholars. Unfortunately, the members of the Church of the East do not agree with the view of the Catholic Chaldean scholars.

The main difference between the two views can be summarised as follows. John Sulaqa became the first uniate Catholic Chaldean Patriarch under the Pope in 1552. The Assyrians say that the present Catholic Chaldean Patriarch (Mar Raphael Bidawid of Bagdad) is the successor of Sulaqa.

The Chaldeans argue that their Patriarch Mar Raphael Bidawid is the successor of the Elia line, the original line, the opposite of Sulaqa line. According to their view the Sulaqa line remained Catholic only for 110 years (1552-1662 A. D.) When Mar Shimun XII (Urmia) died in 1662, his successor Mar Shimun Dinha XIII (1662-1700) returned to the Nestorian line. After him three Patriarchs ruled for 120 years, forty years each. Mar Shimun XIV (1700-1740), Mar Shimun XV (1740-1780) and Mar Shimun XVI (1780-1820). This line, Dr. Zora states, continues to the present day.

The dates of the Patriarchs given in *Marganitha* are slightly different.

Mar Shimun XIII Dinha	(1692-1700)
Mar Shimun XIV Shiemon	(1700-1740)
Mar Shimun XV Michael	(1740-1780)
Mar Shimun XVI Yavnan	(1780-1820)

I shall add the names of the successors.

Mar Shimun XVII Abraham	(1820-1860)
Mar Shimun XVIII Ruvel	(1860-1903)
Mar Shimun XIX Benyamin	(1903-1918)
Mar Shimun XX Poulouse	(1918-1920)
Mar Shimun XXI Eshai	(1920-1975)

Please note that Mar Shimun XXI changed his name to Mar Shimun XXIII. So there has never been a Mar Shimun XXII. The students of the Assyrian Church history should not waste their time looking for Mar Shimun XXII, as there was no such person.

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII had the longest tenure as Patriarch from 1920 to 1973 when he got married. He was shot dead on 6 November 1975. He was the youngest to be enthroned as Patriarch before he had completed 13 years of age. He was the first Patriarch to marry after the patriarch Mar Awa the Great re-introduced celibacy of bishops in 536 A. D. after a lapse of about eighty years. Mar Eshai Shimun was the end of a long line of patriarchs, a hereditary patriarchate back to the mid-15th century.

According to the paper of Dr. Zora, the occupant in the original line, at the time of John Sulaka going to Rome, was Mar Shimun VIII Denha (1555-1558), His successor was Elias VI (1558-76).

Elias VII	(1576-1591)
Elias VIII	(1591-1617)
Elias IX Shimun	(1617-1660)
Elia X Yohannan	(1660-1700)
Elia XI	(1700-1722)
Elia XII Denha	(1722-1778)
Elia XIII Isho Yab	(1778-1804)

1804-1828 was the time of Augustine Hindi, who was the successor to four patriarchs belonging to a third line known as The Josephites. His four predecessors were called Mar Yousif I, Mar Yousif II, Mar Yousif III, and Mar Yousif IV. At the time of Augustine Hindi there was no successor in the Elia line. In 1830 the Elia line united with the Chaldeans. Their patriarchs to date are :

Yohanna VIII Hormizd	(1830-1838)
Nicholas Zaya	(1840-1874)
Yousef IV Audo	(1848-1878)
Elias XIV Abul Yonan	(1879-1894)
Abdisho V Khayatt	(1895-1899)
Yousif Emmanuel II Thoma	(1900-1947)
Yousif VII Ghenima	(1947-1958)
Poulos II Cheiko	(1958-1989)
Raphael Bidawid	(1989-)

The problem here is the names of the patriarchs of the original line after the Sulaqa split. After Shimun VIII Denha, the Chaldean list brings in Elia VI. But according to the Nestorian line as printed in *Marganeetha*, there is no Mar Elia VI. Elia V was the last patriarch by the name Mar Elia. He ruled the Church during 1491-1504.

The successors of Mar Shimun VIII Denha bar Mama till 1692 are

Mar Yaballaha IV	(? -1580)
Mar Denha Shimun IX	(1582-1600)
Mar Shimun X	(1600-1653)
Mar Shimun XI	(1653-1690)
Mar Yabalaha Shimun XII	(1690-1692)

This patriarch built the Mar Shallitha Church in Qudshanis in Kurdistan where members of his tribe known as *Kochisnaye* were living. The list of his successors from 1692 to the last one of his family i. e., Mar Eshai Shimun was mentioned already.

Dr. S. Zora's paper was interesting as well as intriguing to me, as the history of the split in the patriarchate in 1552 at the time of John Sulaqa is an area of interest in my studies. But to the Syriac scholars of the western Churches it was not of that much interest except for a few,

Actually we missed this time the Chaldean scholars like Fr. Petros Yousif of Paris and Rome and Fr. Yousif Habbi of Bagdad. We understood that the scholars from Iraq could not obtain permission to go abroad this time.

The Sulaqa line is a problem. I do not know whether the Chaldeans and Assyrians will arrive at one theory on this difficult and sensitive question.

The participants of the Syriac Symposium had a special dinner at the Corpus Christi College on Tuesday September 1, 1992. We had to pay a fee for the special dinner. Since it was an optional item some people said they did not want it. Nevertheless chairs were not sufficient when we entered the hall. We waited a few minutes and sat on the chairs hurriedly brought into the dining hall. As we were wondering why this shortage was felt it was embarrassing to eat standing after paying the fee in advance. One of the organizers told me that he could see some delegates who chose not to pay. Perhaps they must have decided to eat anyhow, who was going to count the heads?

The menu of the dinner was printed and kept in front of us with a picture of the Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Since I am a vegetarian I was not keen to know what I was eating, but I was curious to know what other guests on the table were eating. As I glanced through it I couldn't understand the meaning of some items. Maybe some readers of this travelogue might decipher these items in the menu. I reproduce below what is written. They may not be found in any English Thesaurus.

Paupiette de Sole Belle Ann

Steak de Venaison a la a la Bordelaise

Pommes de Terre Chateau

Courgettes aux Fines Herbes

Carottes en Buchettes

Chou-fleur Polonaise

Pouding d 'Ete

Cafe

Chocalat a la Menthe

The three lines printed in the leaflet are also not clear to me. As I do not take wine or other liquor, I do not know their taste too. The 1986 mentioned there might be the year of making that drink. I am not sure. As a student of Church history, when I see a date like 1986, I guess it is date of building a Church, or making a bishop

or splitting the Church creating a new denomination. With this expression of ignorance on my part I reproduce below the three lines printed on the left hand side of the menu.

Ernest & Julio Gallo Chardonnay 1986
Jacobs Creek Full Red
College Port

We did not get much free time in order to see the Cambridge Colleges or the town. Since most of the Colleges were close to each other we walked in front of them. But to get an overall view of Cambridge the best plan was to get into a tourist bus and pay £5. Fr. Mamoottil and myself jumped into such a tourist bus and sat on the roofless upper deck. We could see both sides and listen to the running commentary of the guide. Some students make money by working as such commentators in the tourist buses. Our guide stated that many Cambridge Colleges make money by giving their buildings, for holding conferences in vacations. Then we realised the reason for the high charges we had to pay for our Symposium: £136 for 3½ days.

The American cemetery and Memorial was an important stop for tourist travelling in this bus. As these "topless" buses were plying in every 15 minutes we were allowed to get out and walk around the cemetery and get back into another tourist bus at the same spot. So we went out and quickly walked around the American Cemetery.

An information sheet was available. The first three paras give us information about it.

“The cemetery was first established on 7 December 1943 the second anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This sight was selected as a permanent American Military Cemetery because of its scenic grandeur and the fact that a large proportion of the American casualties occurred in this general area of East Anglia. The comparatively level English landscape was a natural landing field for Allied bombers and fighters based in England. The country-side in East Anglia was dotted with airfields built for the air offensive against the Germany-dominated continent. The cemetery site, covering 30.5 acres, was donated by the University of Cambridge. Construction of the cemetery and memorial was completed in 1956 and the cemetery was dedicated on 16 July 1956.

Here are buried 3,811 American war dead, representing 39 per cent of the burials which were originally made in England and Northern Ireland. A high proportion were members of the United States Army Air Force, others died from wounds, accidents or illness incurred in Atlantic waters, in the training areas of the United Kingdom, or the invasions of North Africa and France.

The Bronze tablet on the wall of the visitors' Building was presented by the people of the communities of Cheshunt and Waltham Cross in memory of an American bomber crew who sacrificed themselves to avoid abandoning their disabled aircraft over their homes.”

In the return trip from the cemetery we were having another bus and another guide. He was explaining the

historical significance of each important building or College. I told my Indian companion Fr. Mamoottil that we should look for the restaurant named CAFETARIA where late Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had met his Italian wife, Sonia. We could not find the place. But there was a restaurant close to the main University building which resembled the photograph of CAFETARIA published in our Malayalam newspaper a few weeks before I had left for England. As about 28 years had elapsed since they had met, it was possible, my friends told me, that the names of the restaurants had been changed more than once, although the names of the Cambridge Colleges had never changed.

Among the Indian Prime Ministers, not only Rajiv Gandhi and his wife Sonia had gone to Cambridge, but also Indira Gandhi, the mother of Rajiv Gandhi, had studied in Cambridge. It was during their days at Cambridge around 1940 Indira had fallen in love with Feroz Gandhi which consummated in their marriage in 1942. Indira's father, the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, too was educated in Cambridge.

Cambridge is famous for music. Yet it did not do any good to Jawaharlal Nehru. But to Indira it must have influenced.

Nehru family, did not have any interest in music. But Indira Gandhi got an interest in music because of her husband Feroz Gandhi. Pupul Jayakar in her sensational and intimate biography of her friend Indira Gandhi entitled *The Untold Story of Indira Gandhi* writes:

‘Feroz introduced Indira to the world of classical music. Taught her to tune her ear, to listen, to allow sound to fill her. This was a new experience for Indira. The Nehrus were not musical, they neither sang nor played any musical instrument, nor were there any musical soirees in their home in Allahabad, even in the old days of luxurious living...’

During a short stay at Cambridge we had a quick trip to Ely Cathedral, about 16 miles to the North East. I joined my colleagues in the special bus for the trip to Ely Cathedral although I had been to Ely before. We attended the evening prayer which had already commenced before we reached. We were shown around this historical Cathedral.

There are lots of events and services available for worshippers and tourists to this Cathedral.

There are lunch time recital, Old Library talks, concerts, organ recitals, and many such activities. The topics of talks on Tuesdays in September (it was the same in July and August) were ‘Running the Cathedral today’, ‘Music in the Cathedral’, ‘The life of a Verger’ and the last talk was on ‘Bishops and Deans’ given by the Dean himself.

I was curious to know whether the present British Prime Minister had gone to Cambridge or Oxford. I was told by the British people that Mr. John Major had not been educated either at Oxford or at Cambridge. You do not need University education to lead the people. Democracy does not recognize university degrees or diplomas.

Many students who resort to violence in the campus seem to say so.

It was music to the ears of the Oxford University "old boys" to hear that the President-elect of the USA, Bill Clinton, is an alumnus of Oxford where he had been a Rhodes scholar during 1968-70, before his education in the Yale Law School in the U. S. A. where he had met his future wife, Hillary, another brilliant lawyer.

A news item from the Associated Press (A. P.) appeared in the *Indian Express* on November 6, 1992.

Oxford cheers 'old boy'

OXFORD-Oxford university on Wednesday celebrated "old boy" Bill Clinton's winning the White House with a mixture of praise and pleasure,

University College, where Mr. Clinton was a Rhodes scholar from 1968-70, sent the President-elect a message expressing delight at the election of "a univ man to the presidency of the United States."

A university statement wished Mr. Clinton "well in the demanding and important task ahead of him."

Mr. Clinton is the first Oxonian to win the White House but the university was quick to point out it has educated "a long line" of other world leaders.

These include 24 British Prime Ministers and Prime Ministers and Presidents of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Pakistan, Trinidad and Germany, as well as members of several royal houses, the King of Norway, the crown prince of Japan and crown prince of Jordan, the university statement said.

The University College, one of the most prestigious colleges of the Oxford University, conferred its fellowship to Bill Clinton, the President-elect of the USA. Prof. W. J. Albery said that Clinton would not have to teach any course or do research or grade papers as an honorary fellow. All what Bill Clinton is expected to do is come and feast with his peers in Oxford, England twice a year. I do not know whether the English men would request this American VIP to play saxophone at these feasts.

Dr. Karl Heinz Kuhlman of Bohmte, Germany is a good friend of mine whom I had the privilege to receive as my guest in Trichur. I was guest in his home in Arenshorst, a small village, not far from Osnabruck railway station. A pastor of the Lutheran Church Dr. Kuhlman is interested in the eastern Churches. He had promised to meet me at Cambridge. He and his wife arrived on the final day of the Syriac Symposium to attend the symposium on Christian Arabic studies. He made it as promised. It was a pleasure to meet him and his wife briefly. Although he invited me to Germany, I had to depart in peace hoping to meet him in his home in a future journey.

At the conclusion of the Syriac Symposium we had a business session. During the Conference in Belgium there was some whispering campaign to challenge the present leadership and demand for a change. But this time there was no such schemes. It was a smooth session. No contest to wrest power from the present office-bearers. We were invited to hold the next symposium in Sweden (Uppsala or Lund) i. e., in 1996.

CHAPTER 3

Visit to Moscow

It was my first visit to Russia. Visa to Russia is not easy. A tourist visa application takes about one month for processing in the normal routine. If one pays \$60 in Washington he could get a visa there. So in May '92 during my visit to Washington I tried for it. But the Russian Embassy in Washington D. C. demanded that I should show them evidence of hotel reservation. In order to get it I should go to a travel Agent. But the travel Agent I approached said that she specialised in tours to Latin American countries and not to the former Soviet States. Another travel Agent said that they booked only five-star hotels in Russia and that would not suit my valet. They advised me to go to New York and approach the INTOURIST if I needed an economical accomodation in Russia.

In London in Sept 1992 I joined the long queue of the British people trying to spend their holiday in Russia, as it was cheaper after the devaluation of the Russian rouble. The queue extended to the road outside the gates of the embassy building. The tall policeman there was giving special attention to this queue of patient and anxious tourists trying to get a visa soon without paying extra fee. The man standing in front of me said that he had to leave the next day. "The embassy people

demanded for £40. I am not prepared for such a bribe," said he.

£40 is the fee for an emergency processing of the visa application. Narsai Narsai, my Assyrian friend, who had gone to the embassy on my behalf while I was at Cambridge warned me that I would not get the Russian visa. "Forget it," he told me "You will not get the Russian visa." My response was that I would make an effort to get the visa. I couldn't forget it like that; for friends in Moscow were anxiously waiting for my visit. I should make a trip to Moscow this time.

Finally, I reached the desk where I submitted my application form. I had a formal invitation from Prof. Konstantin Petrovich Matyveyev of Moscow in the Russian language. The clerk at the counter received my application and asked me to collect my visa after three days paying a visa fee of £40. I agreed and left the place. I began to speculate whether I would really get the visa or would I be told on the third day that they did not get clearance from Moscow.

According to the instructions printed in the visa application form the need for a clearance from Moscow was a 'must'. At the same time, owing to the changed circumstances I could guess that they would not turn down any application at the absence of an okay from Moscow. When Russia needed every dollar or Pound from abroad, they could not afford, to deny the clearance to any tourist. Moreover, I was not a famous or notorious man to threaten the security of Russia. Neither Gorbachev nor Boris Yeltsin may have heard of my name.

I could not believe my ears or eyes when the visa was handed over to me, on Monday Sept 7, 1992 from the Russian embassy in London. I stood for a moment for further directions from the counter. The man said, "That is your visa." I stood staring dumbfounded at that piece of paper for a second. Is this really the piece of paper for which I was standing in a long queue? Is this the piece of paper for which I had tried in Washington D. C. in May and again now in London? Like a true follower of doubting Thomas I looked at it again and walked out of the Embassy in total astonishment.

The same day I went to the Heathrow airport along with my sister's daughter Sheena who was any way going to the airport to receive my sister and family returning after a vacation in Trichur, my hometown. As their flight was delayed we had plenty of time at the airport. We walked into the British Airways counter and got a reservation to Moscow. We requested a booking for the following Thursday. After a few minutes the reservation was done and a sticker was fixed to my ticket. We did not check it. The date in that was 11th instead of 10th. I did not then bother to think whether Thursday was 10th or 11th as long as I had the 'okay.'

It was only after a day I realised that the ticket was okayed for 11th and it was Friday and not Thursday. I knew very well that I had requested for a Thursday. My problem then was whether the 11th found on my sticker was right, or was it a mistake for 10th which we had requested. What was in the British Airways Computer? If that was 10th and I reported to the airport only on 11th I might miss the flight. I was in a dilemma. When I telephoned my niece about this, her response was that

there was no need to worry whether their computer had 10th or 11th. If I wanted it she could still try to arrange the flight for the 10th.

That was a difficult question. Do I need an extra day in London? Or do I need that day in Moscow? I preferred a day less in London and wished to utilise that extra day in Moscow. Later I received a telephone call informing that it was done. My niece personally took me to the airport to see me off. She was in a hurry to report to her hospital as she was taking her final examination to be a Fellow of Royal College of Ophthalmologists (F. R. C. Ophth.) within a week. She talked to the lady at the counter and made sure that I was on that flight. I was glad to know later that she did pass her exam in flying colours.

Mr. Thomas, son of my neighbour T. G. Thomas master, came to see me off. He kept me company and we talked about our days at Trichur. His younger brother Richie was my classmate. It is a pleasure to meet old friends in distant lands.

Since my flight was in the morning I did not want my Assyrian friends to flock at the Heathrow airport just to see me off. Being aware of the thick traffic in London my advice to friends and relatives is not to waste time seeing off somebody, if he is a seasoned traveller. If he is not an experienced traveller it might be necessary to give a helping hand to check-in at the proper counter and at the appropriate time.

British Airways flight was a direct one from London Moscow. Had I flown by Alitalia which issued my

ticket I would have to fly to Rome and catch another flight to Moscow. To avoid such delay this arrangement was made to suit my convenience. Sometimes international carriers have such transfer arrangements. Maybe that was the way they could canvass enough passengers in some routes.

A Russian Orthodox priest greeted me when we landed at the airport in Moscow. He was also travelling from London. He introduced himself to me and said that he was the priest of the Russian Orthodox Church in England. He hailed from Hanwell close to Ealing where I had conducted Assyrian service. In a minute we felt close to each other. It is amazing that total strangers become intimate friends instantly—for such are the ways of the world!

A Quaker was also on the flight. I had heard about the Quakers in England. I was told some years ago by somebody that the owner of the Cadbury chocolates which we eat (I used to eat it before I became diabetic) is a member of the Quaker community. Alfonso Mingana was financed by Dr. Edward Cadbury to buy and bring Syriac manuscripts from Mesopotamia to England. That was in the early decades of the present century.

I said "hello" to my Quaker friend. I told him that I was behind him in the queue in the Russian Embassy in London whilst applying for the visa. He told me that he was going to spend some time in Moscow and would be lecturing also in the Moscow University. He would be attending the "Quakers" meeting in Moscow the following Sunday. I am told that the Quakers are quiet people. Silence is gold is the motto of their worship

meetings. While we stood in the queue outside the gates of the Russian Embassy in London he looked back and demanded that everybody should back up. Nobody paid heed to his advice. After we entered the room he again demanded that the people behind him should back up. His request fell on deaf ears. "Is it too much to ask" demanded he. That too did not evoke any response. All of us kept quiet to the question of this Quaker.

Passengers gathered at the baggage arrival area. I paid \$1 to get a trolley to push my two bags. I could have carried it in my hands without a trolley. Yet I thought that I should not try to save one dollar in a country where it was much needed.

Green Channel is usually my channel as I do not carry expensive gifts or goods. But I saw people turned away from the Green Channel area. One of us verified whether we could pass through the green channel as we had no goods to declare. He was told by the officials that we could not go through the green channels. It is meant for group tours. We could pass through the red channels only as we were individual passengers and they needed a declaration from each of us stating how much foreign currency each was bringing into the country. That was meant to keep a strict control of the economy which was fast deteriorating.

Professor Konstantin Petrovich Matyveyev, the President of the Academy Assyria, was there at airport. Vice President of the Academy Assyria, Dr. Valentine Arkhin, too was there. He owns a car. Therefore he gave me to the house of Professor Matyveyev. I was accompanied to the house by Mrs. Matyveyev with whom I

had tried to talk over the telephone from England two days back. She did not speak English well but we both tried our best to make my message clear to her.

Before we sat for dinner there was a telephone call from England. I knew that it was from my sister Susheela George from Rugby. She was very anxious about my going to Moscow. She enquired whether everything was alright in Moscow. I told her that the airport and the streets appeared to be calm and there was no indication of any turmoil or insurrection anywhere.

The first dinner in Russia was more than sumptuous. I told my hosts that I did not take meat, but I took fish or eggs; I did not take any of these 25 days before Xmas, 50 days before Easter and during the 3-day-fast known as the Rogation of the Ninavites.

Caviar and Vodka were perhaps the distinctive items in the menu of a dinner in Russia. I ate Caviar. But Vodka, I did not touch. I have heard about the famous Vodka and the incredibly inevitable place of it in the Russian society and how soviet leaders had staged a coup against Gorbachev after consuming many bottles of Vodka.

When I explained to my hosts of my aversion to drinks, they respected my sentiments and gave me soda water. As to the sweets offered I had to beg their forgiveness as I was a diabetic patient of 15 years standing.

If I were only a beginner, in the diabetic fraternity I would have consumed a tiny cup of ice cream. But to me, at this stage a pinch of sugar was enough to damage

my health. Dr. Matyveyev said, "You forget that you are diabetic when you are on travels." Saying that he began to put into practice what he preached. He is a diabetic patient like me. Yet he ignored that reality and consumed chocolates and ice cream like children.

The apartments in Russia are privatised now. Dr. Matyveyev's apartment was convenient with television and such comforts. There were TV programmes during the day also. Instead of lessons on collective farming or instruction on Communist ideology, now there are movies and music. People in a relaxed mood watch TV programmes broadcasted in Russia and from abroad. I pray that this freedom should not result in idleness and luxury.

There was no electricity in the corridors or staircases of the apartment buildings. Because of the scarcity of electricity and other essential things nobody was interested in providing light in the staircases. The individuals lived and worked inside their apartments. There was enough light inside. But when we went out we had to light the matches to see our way to the staircase.

There were lots of books in the study room of Prof. Matyveyev. He is a self educated man. He went to the Lenin library and borrowed books after books and returned it after reading them. Thus he earned a Ph. D. in Political Science. Then he taught Political Science, Arabic and such subjects. He wrote several books. His personal library in his apartment is an evidence of his love for books. He invited some Assyrian youngsters to his apartment and presented them the books he had written. "you can help the people by giving books to them and encouraging them to read books," Professor Matyveyev explained to me his philosophy of life.

CHAPTER 4

In & Around Kremlin

Kremlin Hospital

That is the "Kremlin Hospital," said Prof. Matveyev pointing to a big building as we were walking in the Kremlin part of Moscow. This must be the place where communist leaders from India, including the former Chief Minister of Kerala the late C. Achuta Menon from my hometown Trichur, were treated.

The Kremlin Hospital was not meant as a general Hospital for the public. It was for the elite in the bureaucracy. About the special treatment offered by the Soviet regime let us look at what a Russian, none other than Boris Yeltsin, the present Russian President, has written in his fully updated autobiography captioned *Against the Grain* (Published by Pan Books Ltd, London, Price £ 2.50) This book is a best-seller in the West. It is not much known in India.

The wards in the 'Kremlin hospital' are huge suites, again surrounded by luxury: porcelain, crystal, carpets and chandeliers. Afraid of taking responsibility, an individual doctor never makes a decision on diagnosis and treatments are invariably agreed upon by a group of between five and ten doctors,

sometimes including the most highly qualified specialists. Yet in Sverdlovsk I was looked after by one general practitioner, Tamara Kurushina, who knew me, always made a precise diagnosis in any situation, and prescribed the treatment herself, whether it was for a headache, a cold or just general debility. I regarded those faceless groups of consultants with great suspicion and since I reverted going to the usual district polyclinic, my head stopped aching and I have begun to feel much better all round. I haven't been to see a doctor for several months. It may be a coincidence, but it is also symbolic. When you are a member of the Polit Bureau, your own personal physician is obliged to examine you everyday, but a lack of professional and personal freedom hangs over him like a Sword of Damocles.

Soviet Leaders

The prominent party leaders in the Soviet Union always enjoyed a lot of luxury. It is not freedom. Nobody felt free. They enjoyed amenities. These luxuries did not produce "either comfort or convenience." Boris Yeltsin writes in *Against the Grain*.

This all-powerful directorate can do anything. The life of a party leader is lived beneath its unsleeping, all seeing eye and it satisfies every whim starting dacha behind a huge green fence encircling spacious grounds along-side the Moscow river, with a garden, tennis courts and games pitches, a bodyguard under every window and an alarm network. Even at my level as a candidate member

of the Polit Bureau, my domestic staff consisted of three cooks, three waitresses, a housemaid, and a gardener with his own team of under-gardeners. My wife, my family and I long accustomed to doing everything with our own hands, simply didn't know what to do with ourselves. And surprisingly, all this luxury was incapable of producing either comfort or convenience. What warmth can there be in a marble-lined house?

Communist system meant for the common good. Individual interests were never envisaged in this system. Boris Yeltsin's above mentioned autobiography bares it when he writes candidly, although accusingly of Stalin.

Within this system nothing belongs to the individual. Stalin cunningly brought this machinery to such a state of perfection that even the wives of his immediate colleagues did not belong to them; they, too, belonged to the system. And the system could take those wives away and imprison them, just as Stalin imprisoned the wives of Kalinin and Molotov, and neither man dared to utter so much as a squeak of protest.

The Autobiography, referred to above, states that all the needs of a Polit Bureau member is met out of the State funds. A bodyguard commander will see to it that the leader's wish is always fulfilled. Yeltsin writes:

My bodyguard commander, a most attentive man, was called Yuri Fyodorovich. One of his chief duties was to see to the fulfilment of any wish that might be expressed by his—I almost said, lord and

master—for whose safety and comfort he was responsible. Do you want a new suit? Certainly, and precisely at the appointed hour comes a discreet knock on the door of your office, in comes a tailor who takes your measurements; next day he returns for a fitting and very soon you have an elegant new suit. Do you need a present for your wife for 8 March? (the date celebrated in the USSR as International Women's day). No problem: You are brought a catalogue with a choice of gifts which would satisfy even the most sophisticated female taste—and all you have to do is choose! On the whole, the attitude towards families is considerate.

Weather

The weather was tolerable. I did not carry any wollen clothes to England as I thought August-September should be pleasant in Cambridge and London. But when I was leaving London to Moscow I began to worry whether the weather in Russia would be too cold. My sister Susheela in Rugby gave me a sweater. It helped.

The temperature did not go below 20 °C. Therefore I managed without suffering from cold. Moreover I did not go out of Moscow. I was reading the account of an English journalist Trevor Fishlock in his book *Out of Red Darkness* (Price £9.55). It describes his visit to Yakutsk, the coldest city on earth. This city of 200,000 people is in Siberia.

I dressed for the outside: thermal underwear, a thick wool shirt, a quilted shirt, thick trousers, long

heavy socks, insulated boots, a long scarf, thin woollen inner gloves, thick outer gloves, a fur hat and an ankle-length down coat with a fur collar, like a duet with sleeves. I went down-stairs to the lobby to meet my guide. She was Nadia, a Yakut in her early twenties, rather shy, with a round and slightly solemn face. She had painted her lips with a brilliant scarlet lipstick. She had not met anyone from Britain before. She looked at me up and down, like a nanny to make sure I had my hat, scarf and gloves, and led the way through the three doors into the startling wilderness.

The temperature in which this British journalist walked was around minus 45 degree centigrade. Some people looked "as fat as bears in their heavy clothes, weighed down by cold and gravity." The road was full of snow. In the above mentioned book the British journalist records, "The snow was fine and dry and deep and the distinctive sound of the city was the loud squeaking of trudging boots." I am glad that I did not go to Siberia. I would have frozen there.

There were occasional rains in Moscow during my stay there in September. The people did not mind the rain. Some carried umbrellas. I did not have one. When we walked in Kremlin, there were thousands of people including tourists, walking in the rain. The rain there is not as heavy as the rains in India. Yet I did not enjoy walking in the rain as my clothes could get wet. Professor Matveyev did not seem to mind the rain. His coat and cap gave him sufficient protection.

Marriages

On Sept. 13 when we went around Kremlin we saw about a dozen couples photographed. I asked my host

whether September is a special month for marriages. He said in Russia they have no auspicious season for marriages. People get married any time they want to. Looking at the gorgeous white long wedding dresses of the brides, my host added: "People say they have no money in Russia owing to the nearly-no-value of the Russian rouble, yet these people have money for getting married in good style."

About 30 miles from my town Trichur, there is a famous Hindu Temple at a place called Guruvayur. On September 13 this year there were plenty of marriages in front of the deity, Lord Krishna. It was the last auspicious day for marriages (final Sunday of *Chingam*, the first month of the Malayalam Era). The record number of marriages there on that day was 97. The offerings of money, gold, elephants and such would total to millions per year in this temple.

The Indian railways are constructing a new railway line from Trichur to Guruvayur because of the increase of devotees to this temple. The present Chief Minister of Kerala, Mr. K. Karunakaran, worships at this temple early morning on the first day of every month of the Malayalam Era which is 16 or 17 on the English calendar.

It takes more than six hours drive for the Chief Minister who was accused of travelling in the fastest moving car in the rough roads of our state where patches and ditches would often appear in the roads within a few months after the repair. As long as contractors give bribes to engineers or political parties, these patches and ditches will not disappear.

The new couples visit not only the Kremlin Square but also Churches and monasteries. While I was visiting the monastery on 11 September a marriage party was there and they were busy taking photos. Some, in the marriage party saw me in my colourful and unusual dress. They asked my permission to be photographed with me. Professor Matveyev told them that they would be blessed in their life, as they were photographed with a Metropolitan from India.

The Leaders' Speed

In India we often blame the government leaders blocking the traffic for the sake of Prime Minister, President and some top leaders. In Kerala we blame the Chief Minister, the present incumbent only, for his over-speed until his car accident a few months ago which took him to Washington D. C., for treatment. I was intrigued by what the Russian President writes about the Soviet leaders' utter disregard for the people on the road.

"Muscovites usually stop and watch whenever a government ZIL flashes past with a hissing of tyres at great speed. They do not stop out of any great respect for the occupant of the car, but because it is a really impressive sight. Even before the ZIL has driven out of your gateway, the traffic-police posts all along your route have been informed. The lights are green all the way, the car races along without stop, and you drive quickly and pleasantly. Senior party leaders have obviously forgotten that there are such things as traffic jams and traffic lights at red."

Those who read the above remark of Boris Yeltsin would comment without any prejudice that the Kerala Chief Minister, often called the leader, would have welcomed to be a leader in the Soviet Union just for the pleasure of speed, although he is a confirmed arch-enemy of the Communists. Perhaps he is not aware of this speed-factor in Kremlin, although he served as Home Minister under C. Achuta Menon, a Communist leader towing the Moscow line.

In Moscow I saw many cars parked in a queue waiting to get petrol. There is a scarcity for petrol in Russia. It is not created by the Gulf Crisis. Because the Soviet Union did not depend on the oil from the Gulf. They have their own oil.

After my visit, India finalised an agreement with M/s. Nafta Moscow for the supply of 80,000 to 100,000 tonnes of crude oil. The agreement was arrived at in the first week of October when a delegation from Moscow visited New Delhi. This is in an addition to the one million tonnes supply agreed upon Moscow earlier. This will be under "clearing dollar account" arrangement, envisaged in the protocol signed between Russia and India.

Women are active and independent. They do not only buy goods but also sell. The following news item in the Time magazine dated June 6, 1988, although outdated, is still relevant. That issue of TIME has a cover photo of Raisa Gorbachev.

Even now I see women selling goods in the market place. The news about a woman engineer is an example.

“At Moscow’s Cheryomushkinsky market Nadezhda Nickolaevna Rybkina, 37, spoons honey into an assortment of used glass jars brought from home. “My parents make this honey,” she explains. “They are retired, but they have 15 hives, and my husband and I help them with the business.” The rewards for Rybkina’s family-based venture, a sideline from her regular job as an engineer at a factory that makes parts for gas pipelines, are substantial: on an eight-day selling trip to Moscow from her home in Konoton 380 miles to the Southwest, she hoped to gross about \$3,300.

“We’re hardworking people,” she says, I work weekdays in the factory, weekends in the country.” She and her husband, who is the head of the power-supply service in her plant, live with their 14-year-old son in a two-room apartment in Konotop. The family’s income, not counting the occasional windfall from honey, is nearly \$700 monthly. “We have quite enough money,” says Rybkina. But there’s not enough to buy.”

When George Vertanov came to see me he was wearing several medals. To me he looked like a five star general. No, than I realised that I had come to Moscow. In Russia people delight in wearing many medals and coloured ribbons. After a couple of days when I was entering the studios of the Moscow Radio, a palatial edifice, I saw again security officials with many medals and ribbons.

Saul Bellow, the Nobel Laureate in literature for the year 1976, an American Jew, amusingly ruminates over

the impressive medals and ribbons pinned to the uniform of the Soviets, when he refers to the badges and buttons of the American activists in *SPAN*, New Delhi, Dec. 1992, pp. 34,35.

“Seeing people virtually covered with credentials, I am reminded of the layers of medals and campaign ribbons worn by Soviet generals in official photographs.”

Perhaps nobody even thought of such comparison between Soviet soldiers and the American activists or or the Presidential campaign volunteers with buttons and badges. It seems that the Russians have now learned the social activism from their new benefactors, Americans. Saul Bellow does not seem to have any appreciation to the protestant people. In the *SPAN* quoted above, Bellow digs at the activists. p.34.

“Most people conclude that there isn’t much, practically speaking, that they can do. A few become activists and fly around the country demonstrating or remonstrating. They are able to do this in a free and prosperous America. I speculate sometimes about the economics of militancy. There must be a considerable number of people with small private incomes whose life work is to march in protest, to be vocal partisans.”

As an intellectual, Saul Bellow searches his soul, pours out his heart, and stirs us into action when (p. 34) he refers to

“the rising volume of crimes and diseases, the disgrace of the so called educational system—

about ignorance, fanaticism, faction, about the clownishness of candidates for the presidency?

Is it possible to take arms against so wide a sea of troubles?

Wherever it is feasible, arms, of course, should be taken. But we must also consider what it requires to face the trouble sea in its planetary vastness—what an amount of daily reading it demands of us, to say nothing of historical knowledge. It was brave of Karl Marx to say that the time had come for thinkers to be doers. But to consider what his intellectual disciples did in the 20th century will send us back to our seats.’’

The *Indian Express* dt. Dec 5, 1992 reports about the pandemonium in the Russian Parliament.

Deputies clash in Congress

’’MOSCOW - Violent clashes broke out on Thursday in Russia’s legislature between people’s deputies which led to the adjournment of the session of the Congress till Friday.

The clashes took place after radical deputies rushed to the podium to protest against a decision to hold a secret vote on a key constitutional amendment which would curtail the powers of President Boris Yeltsin.

Deputies traded blows and shoved each other in front of the Kremlin Grand Palace Hall for three

minutes even when the speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov called for order.

President Boris Yeltsin who was sitting on the podium when the trouble began, quickly left at the first sign of trouble.

The deputies overwhelmingly opted for a secret vote on the question of the Bill on the Government.

At this, radical democrat supporters of President Yeltsin moved menacingly to encircle the podium on which Mr. Khasbulatov was sitting.

This brought the other side on their feet. They moved to create a defensive circle around the podium. In the resulting melee several deputies were seen throwing punches at each other."

Reading reports about the violent scenes in the Indian Parliament nowadays, one would wonder whether the Russians adopted such "Parliamentary" behaviour from the Indian parliamentarians or vice versa. The reports in March 1993 also tell us that the confrontation between the speaker Khasbulatov and President Yeltsin is on the increase.

The Russians are frantically trying to revamp their economy by selling military weapons to countries including India. There are rumours that the Americans are not happy that the Russians are selling arms, because such business will reduce the demand for the production in the factories in America manufacturing arms and ammunitions. Yet Russians went ahead with signing of contracts for

sales. The following report in *Indian Express* dt Dec 3, 1992 is self explanatory:

Russian arms worth dollar 650 m. for India

MOSCOW - Russia will go ahead with arms sales and it had signed major contracts with India, China, Iran, Syria and many other countries.

Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar informed the Congress of People's Deputies, now in session, that Russia would pursue this policy of earning revenue from arms sales and said the question now was to supply arms not on credit but for convertible currency or for goods which Russia needed.

"We will continue this work further, based on these objectives", he said.

Saying that it was important to stabilise the level of arms exports, Mr. Gaidar said major contracts had been signed with China for about \$1 billion, with India for \$650 million with Iran for \$600 million.

Mr. Gaidar and Moscow had no intention of fuelling regional conflicts through arms exports. "We have no intention of kindling international conflicts—this goes without saying—of providing weapons to conflict areas."

"At the same time, there are no grounds whatsoever for us to lose this very important market", he added.

Mr. Gaidar said Russia was close to hyperinflation and could not risk changes in its economic policy.

Mr. Gaidar, intermittently jeered by conservative opponents, said Russia had survived a difficult first year of reform.

He said the Government had no choice but to stand by the tight financial policy that his foes charge is destroying Russian industry. PTI & Reuter

Inflation is high in Russia. The report by the Associated Press from Moscow about Christmas & New Year shopping this year published in the *Indian Express* dated January 4, 1993 gives some idea of the scarcity of goods as well as the spiralling prices in Russia.

MOSCOW - Crowds lined the cavernous Children's world toy store on the last few shopping days before the New Year's holiday. But this year, many customers weren't hunting for gifts; they were selling them.

"I haven't sold many today. People think my toys are too expensive", complained Natasha, a pensioner hawking imported stuffed Koala bears wearing T-shirts and pointed red hats. "Only people with money can buy them, people who don't have to think about the price."

Private peddlers have done a brisk business at Children's World in recent weeks, taking advantage of the high State prices for goods to capitalise on

impoverished Muscovites desperate to finish their shopping in time for New Year's Russia's main gift-giving holiday.

Last year, before Russia launched its free-market reforms, the State-run Children's World was practically devoid of toys. The main hall, usually overflowing with crowds and cheap plastic trinkets was almost empty except for a few scattered dust balls and discarded boxes.

Now, there are more goods in the stores, but inflation has hit so hard that most people are finding it difficult to afford even basic goods.

The main hall of Children's World has been turned inexplicably into a showroom for Westerners, gleaming Pontiac and Dodge autos that drew only a few glances from shoppers searching for affordable gifts.

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"I've bought chocolate, candy and a doll as New Year's gift, but I really wanted to buy Sergei an electric train set. But we can't afford one."

The average Russian salary is less than 9,000 roubles per month (about \$22 at the latest exchange rate) leaving little room in the budget for holiday cheer.

On January 3, 1993, Russia and the U. S. A. signed a treaty. The *Indian Express* reported next day as follows:

MOSCOW - The United States and Russia on Sunday signed the most far-reaching disarmament treaty ever which will cut their nuclear weapons by two-thirds by the year 2003.

President George Bush and Boris Yeltsin, who toasted the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-II) at a banquet on Saturday night, signed the accord, which in Mr. Yeltsin's words is a joint "Christmas present" to the world, at the grand Kremlin Palace.

The START-II idea was first mooted at the June summit between the two Presidents and finalised after hectic negotiations before the new year following talks between Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Koozyrev and US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger in Geneva earlier in the week.

The treaty, which supplements an earlier treaty signed by Mr. Bush and then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, in July 1991, not only signifies the growing partnership between the two cold war rivals but crowns the last days of Mr. Bush, who hands over charge to Mr Bill Clinton in 17 days as US President.

START-II sets back the nuclear clock by two decades or more, limiting the United States' nuclear weapons stockpile to about what it was in the 1960s, and Russia to its mid-1970's size.

The ceremony was the climax of Mr. Bush's presidential trip to Russia on what seemed certain to be his final foreign journey as President.

It was the third major arms control agreement of his presidency, a tenure that has coincided with the end of the cold war, the disintegration of the Soviet empire and suprisingly rapid steps toward disarmament.

The treaty of January 3 is described as a Christmas present by Boris Yeltsin. Bush's Christmas was over on Dec 25 and Yeltsin's Christmas was to be on January 7, a difference of 13 days between the Gregorian calendar and the Julian calendar.

The signing of START-II by Yeltsin and Bush was hailed by John Major, Prime Minister of the U. K. His message to Yeltsin praised the treaty as a "great achievement and one which dramatically reduces the threat of nuclear war." The Prime Minister's letter reads, "The world will be grateful to you and George Bush for the leadership you have shown."

Kremlin was not quiet. About 500 hardline communists demonstrated beside the Kremlin brandishing red Soviet flags and portraits of Lenin. They prevented an official car from leaving the Spassky gate, one of the two official entrances to the walled fortress. But Bush's motorcade apparently left through a different exit to Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport as the Communists shouted "Bush, get out of Russia, Shame on Yeltsin; Don't sell Russia to the USA and Bush and Yeltsin are traitors."

CHAPTER 5

The Russian Orthodox Church

It was in 1977 I had the privilege to meet Patriarch Pimen of Moscow when he visited Kerala at the invitation of Catholicos Mar Thoma Mathews I of Devalokam, Kottayam. It was Patriarch's return visit, because Catholicos Mar Thomas Mathews I was the guest of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow in 1976.

The first Russian Orthodox Church delegation to India was in 1962 when the World Council of Churches held their third assembly in New Delhi. The Russian delegates visited Kerala at that time and established relations with the Catholicos of the Orthodox Syrian Church in Kottayam.

Philipose Mar Theophilos, the senior Metropolitan of that Church now, told me that I would get a warm welcome in Moscow. He himself had been there several times, the last one was the millennium celebration of the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church, celebrated in a colourful manner in 1988 when the Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was on the podium with the religious dignitaries from around the world.

Poulose Mar Gregorios Metropolitan is well known in Russia, in both secular and sacred circles even when

he was a priest working in Geneva by the name Fr. Paul Varghese. I do not think that he can remember how many hundred times he had been to Moscow.

Patriarch Pimen came to the lime light as a result of the millennium celebration and extensive ecumenical contacts which the Russian Orthodox Church established during his Patriarchate.

Three of his immediate predecessors ought to be remembered with gratitude as they steered his Church through the turbulent years after the Communist revolution. Such stormy periods are trials and tribulations to any prelate.

Patriarch Tikhon who died on March 25 (April 7, Western calendar) 1925 was the worst sufferer. He became Patriarch only in 1917 after the fall of the monarchy. Actually the question of the restoration of the Patriarchate was agitating the minds of the people of the Russian Orthodox Church for the previous two centuries.

Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow, aged 52, was elected Patriarch on November 5 (18 Western date) and enthroned on November 21 (Dec. 4) in the Kremlin's Cathedral of the Dormition. Owing to the tempestuous historical events happening in Russia in 1917, Patriarch had to suffer much. After $7\frac{1}{2}$ years of Patriarchate, His Holiness Tikhon I died aged about 60 years.

The following paragraph from the book *The Russian Orthodox Church* p. 26 gives us an opportunity to understand Patriarch Tikhon's determination to hold on to the Christian faith under a communist regime.

On the eve of his death, on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25 (April 7), 1925 Patriarch Tikhon signed an Address to Believers, which became his testament, indicating to believers a firm basis for their attitude to the new state system: " ..without transgressing against our faith or our Church, without allowing any concessions or compromises in the matter of faith we must be sincere as citizens in our attitude to the Soviet government and work for the common good."

Two of my friends in Moscow gave me the picture of Patriarch Tikhon I as mementos. This shows that the Russian Orthodox Christians today have high regard for a prelate who had served their parents and grand parents.

For 17 years there were no Patriarch in Russia. Metropolitan Sergy (Stragorodsky) (1867-1944) gave leadership to the Russian Church first as a Deputy Patriarchal Local Tenens and then as the Patriarchal Local Tenens.

He was elected and enthroned as patriarch on Sep 12, 1943 in the Cathedral of the Epiphany, Moscow. Patriarch Sergy was already 76 years old when he became the Patriarch. Despite the difficulties of the Second World War he appointed new bishops and restored normal Church life in the territories liberated from Nazy occupation. Patriarch Sergy died on May 15, 1944 and was buried in the same Cathedral where he was enthroned seven months earlier.

Patriarch Alexy was enthroned on February 4, 1945. He was 68 years old. He was the Metropolitan of

Leningrad. He shared the woes of the 900-day siege of Leningrad. He was an outstanding theologian. His 25 years as Patriarch marks the period of hectic activities. He gave a boost to theological education and publications. In 1946 the Moscow Theological Institute and the courses for the clergy were transformed into Moscow Theological Academy and Seminary. About his relations with the other Orthodox Churches we read in the book quoted above pp. 28 & 29.

“In July 1948, the five-hundredth anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church’s autocephaly was celebrated. The brotherly co-operation existing between all the Local Orthodox Churches was strengthened during this celebration. During the festivities, a Conference of the Heads and representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches and the Armenian Apostolic Church was held to discuss a number of vital questions concerning Church life and peace-making activity.

During His Holiness Patriarch Alesky’s term, the Russian Church granted autocephaly to the Polish (1948) and Czechoslovak (1951) Local Churches, and to the Orthodox Church in America (1970), and the autonomy within the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Japanese Orthodox Church.”

This Patriarch impressed the Protestants about his ecumenical desires when he took membership in the World Council of Churches in 1961. In 1964 Patriarch Alexy visited the World Council of Churches’ headquarters in

Geneva. Patriarch Alexy, in spite of his old age, initiated many peace talks and inter-religious dialogues.

On April 17, 1970 Patriarch Alexy aged 93, died. His funeral was conducted four days later in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Trinity St. Sergy Lavra.

On June 3, 1971 Patriarch Pimen was enthroned. He continued the ecumenical and inter faith activities of his famous predecessor. He developed relations with Oriental Orthodox, i.e. non-Chalcedonian's Churches which have no inter-communion with the Greek. Russian and other Orthodox Churches which come under the spiritual suzerainty of the Ecumenical Patriarch based in Constantinople (Istanbul) in Turkey. For this end in mind Patriarch Pimen travelled to the Armenian Church, Ethiopian Church, Orthodox Syrian Church in South India. It was during that visit to Cochin, Kerala, I had the privilege to meet Patriarch Pimen in 1977.

Patriarch Pimen too, like his predecessor, paid a visit to Geneva, the headquarters of the World Council of Churches in 1973. As a result, a large contingent of the representatives of the World Council of Churches was present in Moscow in 1978 for the 60th anniversary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in Russia. As the book quoted above states, "This event was an eloquent and memorable testimony to the enhanced spiritual prestige of the Russian Church.

Greater participation was evinced a decade later for the millennium celebration of the arrival of Christianity in Russia in 988 A.D. With the freedom and openness afforded by perestroika, the 1988 celebration saw the functions

crowded by the ecclesiastical dignitaries from East and West, seated along with the rulers of the Soviet Union headed by Mikhail Gorbachev. Patriarch Pimen died in 1990.

Patriarch Alexy II was enthroned as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia on 7 June 1990. Aleksy Rudiger was born on February 23, 1929. After studying in Leningrad Seminary he was ordained deacon on April 15, 1950. He earned his Doctor of Theology degree in August 1958. He was ordained monk on March 3, 1961 and was made Metropolitan (NIKODIM) on Sept 3, 1961. He was President of the conference of European Churches KEK in 1986. He functioned as the Administrator of the Leningrad in 1987-1990. The Church leaders around the world are expecting Patriarch Alexy II to give greater leadership to the Russian Orthodox Church, especially after the crash of the communist control and new-found freedom experienced in Russia.

Monasteries

Russia is famous for its monasteries. Under the Communist rule, it suffered some set-back. Yet it did not totally disappear. About monasticism in Russia we read in *The Russian Orthodox Church*, Translated by Doris Bradbury, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982, pp. 78,79.

“Monasticism in Russia is nearly one thousand years old. In the 11th century, St. Antony of the Caves (St. Antony of Pechery) brought the fundamental principles of monastic life, based on the vows of voluntary chastity, obedience, unselfishness and the striving towards spiritual perfection,

from Mt. Athos to Kiev. He founded the first cenobitic monastery in Russia on the model of the monasteries on Mt. Athos. "Monks imitate the angels," wrote St. John Climacus (6th century). Rejecting all worldly cares and temptations, they dedicate themselves entirely to prayer, and through prayer, to God. The goal of the monastic feat is to attain—through the action of God's grace—spiritual purity, a blameless moral life, and total dedication to God's will. The path to this goal lies through an ascetic feat performed daily for an entire lifetime."

The theological schools continued to function despite the atheism taught by the rulers of the nation. In p. 97 of the book *The Russian Orthodox Church* quoted above, we read,

"Theological research is a means of serving the Church, for the Church's mission is man's salvation. The Church always deals with this great task with regard to the circumstances of the time and place. Inasmuch as theological study is one of the means of expression of the Church's self-awareness, it is natural that every task the Church faces also becomes a theological task, and that every problem of the present day also becomes a theological problem. As a result, theological problems are always varied and closely connected with Church life.

Over the last thirty odd years—until 1980—many Candidates of Theology have graduated from our renewed theological schools, and 48 master's

theses and 15 doctor's dissertations have been defended in these schools. More than sixty of the monks who have graduated from the Academy have been raised to episcopal service."

Now more theological schools are beginning to function. As I talked to the young lady at ARNICA in the Moscow Radio, Alevtina Strukova told me that she had enrolled herself in the new theological institute opening the following Monday i. e., Sept 14, 1992.

There will be new challenges for the new theological students who will be trained because of the competition; they will have to face it, as the Roman Catholics and Protestant evangelicals have been active, while the Soviet Union crumbled and the control of religion by the state has been weakened or eliminated.

Choir

When I attended the Sunday worship on Sept 13, 1992 I was pleasantly surprised to listen to the beautiful Church music without the accompaniment of instruments. People could sing well even without a microphone. I thought that some microphone had been kept hidden some where in the Church, But I could not find any concealed microphone. Maybe the accoustics of the Church building with high ceiling coupled with the trained throats of the singers make it sound it incredibly beautiful.

Later I read in the book *The Russian Orthodox Church* pp. 247, 248.

“As the successor to the Greek liturgical tradition, the Russian Orthodox Church never used instrumental music in Church. Therefore, in speaking about Russian Church music, we have in mind vocal music exclusively.

“Early church singing is the expression of the spirit of our people, who have been brought and matured under the influence of the Church, which was their preceptor and a loving mother. But while the Church has had a religious and moral influence on the people, the people have also contributed a great deal of their own natural wealth and gifts to the Orthodox Church in the form of melodies reflecting the depth and power of their religious feeling and spiritual qualities in general. These melodies, which may be elevated and simple, severe and majestic, or tender and touching, have been given by the people with a pure heart as their best achievement, to their mother—the Church.”

Ivan the Terrible had gathered the best singers of his time around Aleksandrovskaia suburb. Fyodor the Christian and Ivan Nos are some of the celebrated singers of the 16th century.

Polyphonic singing in the Russian Orthodox Church can be traced back to 1540s in Novgorod's St. Sophia Cathedral. In 1551 Ivan the Terrible referred to Novgorod's vocal tradition in Moscow Churches to the Moscow Council. The modern Church music in Russia continues the old tradition, but at the same time uses the works of the 19th century composers.

Church Bells

I heard the bells chiming in a very musical manner. The Assyrian guide in the Novodovichy monastery explained at length how the huge bells fixed on tall bell towers invited people to pray.

Russian chroniclers refer to Church bells as early as 988 A. D., i.e., the earliest beginnings of the Church in Russia. Russians love to hear the chiming of the bells which they consider to be summons from God to the believers to be free from the cares of the world.

The first bell made by the Russians was in Kiev in the mid-13th century. In the following century bell-casting reached its zenith in Moscow. About the importance of bell ringing in Russia the book quoted earlier remarks as follows (p. 254),

“Church bells were witnesses to the history of Russia. The joyful pealing of hundreds of bells filled Moscow, greeting the warriors returning from Kulikovo Field. Minin and Pozharsky’s volunteer corps marched through Moscow to the peals of church bells.

“In 1735 the craftsman Mikhail Motorin cast the world’s largest bell, weighing nearly 200 tons and known as the Tsar-Bell.”

We shall conclude our discussion on the topic of bell ringing, which most churches in India have not taken seriously. In p. 254 we read :

“Churches usually have several bells which differ in size and sound: festal, Sunday, polymellifluous (polyeleos), every-day, and small bells. Each peal has its specific purpose—sorrowful and funeral, or proclaiming joy, a feast, a victory, or salvation from danger. Two types of bell-ringing have been known in Russia since time immemorial: blagovest (announcing the good tidings), when one or several bells are rung, but not all simultaneously, and “pealing” as such. The harmonious pealing or several bells in turn is called perezvon. The thrice-repeated pealing of several bells with pauses is called trizvon (literally “threepeals”) or trezvon. The ringing of one bell, the blagovest summons the faithful to divine service, and every Russian Orthodox believer unfailingly crosses himself when he hears it. The famous Rostov bells are known to all Russia. In the middle of the last century, Archpriest Aristarkh Izrailev made a music notation of the ringing of the Rostov bells, which rang in C. Major.”

Lack of expensive organs as found in Germany or other foreign countries does not belittle the importance the Russian Church attributes to religious music. The general impact of the Russian Church music is seen in the following extract from the book quoted above. We read in p. 249.

“The melody endows the words with sounds in the given local work and imparts to them a profound and severe religious content which leaves no room for petty sentimentality. This is the marvellous quality of znamenny chant, which is

capable of expressing with great emotion any feelings—from subtle lyrical to majestic and solemn ones, without falling into cheap sentimentality, pomposity, or deliberate overemphasis. It was saved from this, above all, by the main tendency in old Russian church music: the most important thing was to reveal the content of the vocal work and make each word clear, meaningful, and deeply felt to the listeners. That is why it was forbidden in earlier vocal works to repeat words or break them up, so that their meaning would not be obscured and the work as a whole would retain its integrity'' (N. Ivanov, Uspensky's Research in Music. *Theological Studies*, No. 13. 1975, p. 34, in Russian)''.

The inevitable influence of the Byzantine art in the Russian Church music is admitted by N. D. Uspensky, an expert in the Russian Church music. Researches are in progress to dig deep into the roots of the Russian music. We can expect interesting discoveries as a result of these researches such as the deciphering the ancient "hook" notation.

Department of Church Relations

Archpriest Victor Petluchenko is the Vice Chairman of the Department for external Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. His office is the Danielovski Monastery in Danielovski val, 22, Moscow 113191. He is a busy person. Sergei of the Moscow Radio had arranged for this interview. I was late by a few minutes. In spite of the fact that my friend (I do not reveal his name) had ignored the red traffic signal and took a U

turn right in the heart of the city, in order to get me in time for meeting Archpriest Victor, yet I was late by about five minutes. But I was comforted when my interpreter turned up ten minutes late and my host Archpriest Victor made it yet another ten minutes later.

For more than half an hour we talked about our Churches. I presented some books I had written. He in turn presented me very useful and expensive books with glossy photos. Although two books were in Russian language one was in English entitled *The Russian Orthodox Church* from which I have quoted extensively in the early portion of this chapter.

After an exchange of ideas and sharing the views about our Churches today we had tea and photographs. The Visual Department of the Moscow University copied it in video. Archpriest Petluchenko who is from Odessa speaks good English.

An Anglican Bishop was coming in when we were just going out. I chatted with the British bishop. He told me that he was the Suffragan bishop for Europe in the Anglican Church. I was pleasantly surprised to know that he was an alumnus of the St. Boniface College, Warminster, Wiltshire where I had studied during 1961-62. I guess that he was senior to me in age. There was not much time to talk with him as he and his friends had come there to meet Archpriest Victor Petluchenko.

The Russian Church is not very happy that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the Roman Catholics are exercising their freedom to strengthen the Roman Catholic Church in Russia.

He does not like the evangelical Protestants either. A lot of Americans under different denominations and organizations are working aggressively in Russia and other former Soviet republics. This is a threat to the predominance of the Russian Orthodox Church. Archpriest Victor said, "The history of the Russian Orthodox Church is as old as the Russian people. It is 8,000 years old." I think that I heard it correctly. It is true that the Russian Orthodox is only 1,000 years old. But he refers to 8,000 years when the Russian culture and his people were one integral unit.

Billy Graham, the American evangelist, had his meetings in Moscow Olympic Stadium a few weeks later. Billy Graham himself recounts that excellent experience in the letter he wrote to many in December 1992.

"This past October, we witnessed in Moscow one of the most remarkable responses to the Gospel we have ever seen. In response to call to repent of their sins and receive Christ by faith, tens of thousands came forward—many in tears, many even running. We thank God for all that He did during those extraordinary days, and we give the glory to Him alone. Without the prayers of people, this tremendous harvest would not have been possible."

CHAPTER 6

Assyrians in Moscow

Academy Assyria

The Academy Assyria is a part of the Pedagogical Society of Russia. It is the brain child of Professor Konstantin Petrovich Matveyev. In Assyrian we can call him Malpan K. Pathrose Mathaí. He is fluent in Arabic, Assyrian, Russian and English. He is about 57 years old and is hoping to do more for the Assyrian language and culture by lecturing abroad as well as publishing and translating books on the Assyrians. He plans to produce video films on Assyrian culture. Both Assyrians and Russians co-operate with this humble effort.

George Vartanov, a veteran Assyrian who fought for Russia in the World War II, came to see me. He has pinned many of his medals which he had got in recognition of his military services for the Soviet Union. He was trying to talk to me in the Assyrian language, although I told him that I was not understanding all what he was telling me.

Andrey V. Osipov is one of the Vice Presidents of Academy Assyria. I met Andrey's mother while I was going from the Moscow airport to Prof. Matveyev's house. Andrey runs a restaurant. When we visited his place, he entertained us with coffee and Russian chocolates. When

Prof. K. P. Matveyev, himself a diabetic like myself, asked me to eat the Russian chocolates showing his example, I fell into temptation and ate some chocolates. I do not believe that his advice is good when he said, "while you are on travel, diabetic patients also can eat sweets."

Andrey Osipov (Andrews Joseph) runs a travel agency called SPUTNIK Express. He was very much interested to arrange group travels in Russia for Indians and vice versa. I was pleasantly surprised to see the map of Kerala hanging on his office wall with the description on bold letters Kerala, God's own country. It was a 1992 tourism promotion literature. I wonder whether any ethnic group will permit others to claim that theirs is God's own country. Maybe some Russians who do not believe in God may permit it.

Tamara, elder sister of Mrs. Nadya Davidova of Georgia, came to see me. Nadya Davidova was in Trichur last year for nearly three weeks in connection with the treatment of her son George who is still suffering from epilepsy. Nadya Davidova wanted to meet me in Moscow. But there were no flights on those days from Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, to Moscow.

Georgia from where Joseb Stalin (death March 5, 1953) hailed, is a separate Republic now. It is the only Republic of the former Soviet Union, apart from the three Scandinavian republics, which did not join the Commonwealth of Independent States. I guess that Georgia would join soon the 11-member Commonwealth of Independent States, as Edward Shervarnadze, the former foreign Minister of the Soviet President Gorbachev, is the President of Georgia now. He was a political leader

in Tbilisi when Gorbachev took him to Moscow. Now after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Shevarnadze returned to his native Georgia to give leadership. Yet civil war is going on in Georgia.

Tamara had brought her sister Nadya's grandson Isho to see me. I had put Isho's photo on the cover page of the book. Nadya Davidova wrote in English and published it in Trichur with a title *Soviet Assyrian in India*. I wrote a FOREWORD to that book.

I was invited to visit an Assyrian home on my first Sunday in Moscow. Jauna, a young Assyrian music teacher who is connected with the Academy Assyria, came to the Russian Church to accompany Prof. K. P. Matyveyev and myself to her house. At her home we were welcomed by her father Nicolas and mother Larisa. Jauna's brother Gregorius with his wife Rajina and their little son Arthur was there. I tried to be friendly with Arthur because of my reputation as an experienced babysitter at Princeton during my studies there in 1967-68. But little Arthur couldn't understand my English and I couldn't grasp his Russian or Assyrian tongue.

The brother of Nicolas, namely Ahiqar, was there with his wife Nina and daughter Lorisa. I enjoyed the Assyrian food. Although *Dolma* was served I could not eat it as it contained meat. Whenever I visited Assyrians in Iraq, Sweden, England, Canada, USA and Australia, they used to prepare *Dolma* with vegetables stuffed, instead of the usual meat.

I enjoyed the Assyrian atmosphere of that home, although these people were far removed from their

homeland in Iraq or Turkey or Iran where they came from. I had to resort to the use of English with some words of *lishana athieqa*, meaning old language, which we believe was the language that Jesus spoke. I recited the Lord's prayer in the language which our Lord had taught His disciples. After the prayers I blessed that home by sprinkling blessed water.

Jauna had taken up music course for her graduation and she was now a music teacher. She played the piano - too pressed the keys in my own indigenous way, using only my right hand, as we in Kerala play our harmonium, a typical Indian musical instrument.

The two Assyrian sisters, Nellie and Elvira, welcomed me to their home. Adam Poulouse of Surrey near London is their relative. I had met Adam Poulouse (A. P. Adam) during my stay in Ealing and he had attended the Qurbana at the Assyrian club on Sept 6, 1992. Nellie and Elvira were happy that I could read the book of Psalms (*Mazmora*) which their father used to read. Although she does not admit it, I guess Elvira Azizova cannot read or write in her father's tongue. I must give credit to her that she speaks good English.

"Is it your photo, Mar Aprem?" she shows me the calendar of 1972 which her late father had given her. "Of course, yes it is my photo, although my beard is blacker, 20 years younger", said I. She talked to me as if we had known each other for years. "When you visit Moscow next time, come straight to our home and stay with us," she says to me. Her husband is a car mechanic. He owns a car. Elvira had visited Cyprus last year,

She gave me a photo taken in 1982 when Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV visited Moscow. Her mother Tamara was seen talking to the Patriarch in the photograph.

Many Assyrian men were the targets of Stalin's stooges. The women too suffered a lot, yet survived. Prof Matveyev himself recalls his childhood days when his father was arrested in front of him and kept in jail on the false charge that he was encouraging the Russians to revolt against Stalin. But this man never knew to speak the Russian language. How would he persuade his Russian neighbours to revolt? There was no use of such questions. Nobody was obliged to give answers. After 15 years of being chained in the prison, he was released and in 1972 or so had a normal death.

The childhood days of Professor Matveyev are bitter memories. He studied borrowing many books from the Lenin library. Although a Political Scientist by profession, he studied the history of his forefathers. He wrote books and articles in Arabic, Assyrian, Russian and English to attract the attention of the scholarly world not only to the woes of the Assyrians, but also to preserve to posterity the grand tradition and heritage of the Assyrians. He was a pioneer in this field for reviving studies in Assyrian culture and language.

The Academy Assyria teaches Assyrian language in addition to the many faculties of English language, Economics, sports and such. He works with his hand in his farm and then reads and writes many books. The library in his house, (privatised) has a collection of many books. Some of my books were already there. He believes that only through the reading of books and

increasing intellectual pursuits the problems of the Assyrians will be solved. When some Assyrian young men came to talk to me, Professor Matveyev took them to his library and presented them with my book as gifts and gave a lecture about our heritage and the Assyrian studies.

Assyrians have been in Russia since the end of the last century. During the World War I (1914-18) there was further expansion of the Assyrian population. The number of the Assyrians now in the former states of Soviet Union is below 40,000. In Moscow itself it is about 5,000. Some Assyrians claim that the number of the Soviet Assyrians would be 1,00,000. Professor Matveyev is emphatic in his opinion that such a claim is an exaggerated one, not taking into consideration the number of the executions of the Assyrians during the Stalin era.

Stella Babahanov was looking after her shop. Her younger sister Rejina was with her inside the shop. Their father Albert Michailovick Babahanov was not there. He is a well known Assyrian in Moscow and has a rich collection of various Assyrian songs recorded on the tape in his house. As my time was limited I could not visit their home. Stella stated that I could take any item from her shop as a gift. There were cigarettes, drinks, chocolates and such items in the shop. I did not need any of those items. She showed me a few rings, as I had a blue coloured stone on the ring worn on the finger of my right hand. I accepted a ring with a white stone. Prof. Matveyev hilariously told me, "Mar Aprem, you have become a millionaire: This stone could cost a

fortune." Later I realised that his exaggerated statement was meant to be a more encouragement to me.

Victor Simonov came to see me. He is Vice President of the Assyrian Federation in Georgia. Simonov was interested to visit our Churches in India soon.

Marona Arsanis is an Assyrian living in Moscow who teaches Aramaic to the new generation of the Assyrians. Marona Arsanis was busy that Sunday with the Sunday school. He is an author and sent me through Siminov a book he had published in 1991 in Moscow. Since it is in Russian I am not able to understand. Marona Arsanis came to Russia from Iran. He may be a relative of the late Rev. Ruvel Arsanis of Iran who was ordained priest in India in 1939 by the late Mar Abimalek Timotheus, as there was no bishop in Iran for our Church then.

Another prominent Assyrian about whom I had heard was Dr. Mrs. Djuna Davitashvili. Archpriest Victor Petluchenko also mentioned her name as one of the prominent Assyrians in Russia.

Djuna was born in the village of Ashuri in Southern Georgia. Her ancestors were healers. She became a doctor graduating from the Medical University of Tibilisi and the LVOV Institute of Physical Science. Dr. Juna worked at the institute of Neurology and Endocrinology at the Moscow Medical Institute. In the early 1970's Djuna developed an innate interest in the Bioenergetic aspects of healing. Her talents were used by the late President Leonid Brezhnev, who encouraged Djuna to help the sick throughout the world.

CHAPTER 7

Indians in Russia

Mr. Alfred S. Gonsalves, our ambassador in Moscow, is an experienced and seasoned diplomat. He had worked in Moscow earlier as a young IFS officer. At that time he had translated the speeches of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Premier Nikita Krushchev.

Our ambassador speaks good Russian, an asset especially in Russia where the political leaders generally do not speak English.

Gonsalves retired from service on 3rd Oct. The *Indian Express* dated October 4, 1992, p.9 has this news relevant to the readers of this book.

MOSCOW—in what is considered as a major shift in its policy, Russia is to finance defence co-operation with India.

This was indicated during the series of discussions the outgoing Indian Ambassador Alfred S. Gonsalves had with top Russian leaders including State Secretary Gennady Burbulis, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, Foreign Economic Relations Minister Pyoter Aven and first Deputy Defence Minister Kokoshin.

Defence Minister of India, Sharad Pawar had a crucial meeting with Russian Foreign Economic Relations Minister Pyotr Aven this week. Sources said financial problems were the main bottleneck in the Russian supply of spares and defence equipment to India.

Deputy Chief of the Arms Export Department of the Russian Government Valery Sobolev admitted in an interview to Itar-Tass after the talks between the two delegations that financial problems were the 'most difficult' in defence cooperation. He indicated that it might take some time to resolve them.

During his meetings with the Russian Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and the Russian Foreign Economic Relations Minister Aven, Mr. Sharad Pawar expressed India's interest in acquiring sophisticated arms for the three wings of the Indian armed forces including the multirole MIG-29 fighters.

While accepting the existing problems in the bilateral economic ties and supplies of spares and equipment to India, Mr. Yegor Gaidar, however, expressed hope that they could be solved to the 'mutual satisfaction' of both the countries and that India would remain Russia's largest arms buyer.

Mr. Pawar who arrived in Moscow on Sunday on a seven-day official visit had three important meetings with the Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, Defence Minister Gen Pavel Grachov and Foreign Economic Relations Minister Pyotr Aven on Monday and visited Kubinka Airforce Base near Moscow on Tuesday.

Soviet Union used to be a friend of India and Indira Gandhi, as well as her father Jawaharlal Nehru and her son Rajiv Gandhi. With the crumbling of Kremlin's power, perhaps India cannot claim that warm friendship with Russia. Russian President Boris Yeltsin is known to be pro-American. Therefore many in India and abroad are not sure that Russia and India are close to each other. Nevertheless, the following comment in *Indian Currents*, Delhi dated September 14, 1992 is relevant.

“Another advantageous factor is the gradual break-up of the centralised system of military transfers set up between Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia. A huge transrepublican consortium has so far been negotiating with foreign countries the arms and spares these three republics are in a position to sell as well as the terms on which transfers are to take place. This centralised system has been working against India's interest. It has been demanding an exchange rate which is just not acceptable to India, and it has been pressing for repayment at a most unfair rate of exchange of the amounts of rupees India owes to the Russian Federation as the successor State for the arms transferred over the last decade, or so.

Many journalists are raising doubts about the stability of Commonwealth of the Independent States. A. P. Venkateswaran, India's former Foreign Secretary, writes in his column *WORLDWATCH* in the *Week* dt August 30, 1992 under the caption 'Crisis of confidence'

“A year after the failed coup on August 19, there was really nothing to celebrate in Moscow. The

sponsors of *Vivat Rossiya* (Long Live Russia) found themselves strapped for money to celebrate in style and the public too was not inclined towards festivity. The majority of those who had enthusiastically barricaded the White House to defend Russian President Boris Yeltsin from the designs of the 'Emergency Committee' now feel disillusioned and let-down."

It was an opportunity to visit the high school where children of important people study. I met a girl who was born in Madras when her father was an official in the USSR Consulate in Madras. I told the children about Stalin's daughter marrying an Indian. Most of them were not aware of this Indian connection of a prominent lady of their country. Since Stalin is not held in respect in Russia today, maybe my revelation of this Indian connection of Svetlana Stalin did not arouse any curiosity.

After returning to India the newspaper has a news about Svetlana Stalin, now 66 years old. She has now no place to stay. She has now entered a refugee home in East End in London.

Her Indian husband was Brijesh Singh, brother of the ruler of a small Zamindari Kingdom in North India. Brijesh Singh went to Moscow to translate communist literature from Russian to Hindi. He was a member of the Communist party of India. Svetlana, whose first marriage had broken, met Brijesh Singh, and they were "married." Actually they lived together without marrying formally.

In October 1966 Mr. Singh died. Svetlana got permission to carry her "husband's" ashes to India.

Mr. Dinesh Singh, now Cabinet Minister for External Affairs, was Minister of State for External Affairs in the cabinet of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Dinesh Singh was the nephew of Mr. Brijesh Singh. Therefore he used his influence to get Svetlana to India. After spending some time in Kalianikar, the village of her husband. Svetlana Alleluya Stalin flew to freedom in 1967 or 1968. She settled down in Princeton where I was studying for *Doctor of Theology* degree then.

In 1970 she married an American. Her third husband was William Wesly Peters. A girl was born to this couple. The girl is called Olga. This marriage ended in divorce after two years. She went to England with Olga. But when she heard that her son was sick, she returned to Russia. Olga could not get used to the Soviet Union. Now broken, the daughter of the once famous Stalin, found refuge in London.

There are robberies in Moscow. The hotel Yugo Zapad where I stayed controlled strictly the visitors to the hotel. We were safe there because of the security guards. The news I read in the newspaper later indicates that even in diplomatic houses there is no safety. *Indian Express* dated October 29, 1992 carried the news items reported by the Press Trust of India. By the way, the PTI has an Indian Representative stationed in Moscow to report about the events in Moscow for the benefit of Indian newspapers.

“MOSCOW-An Indian diplomat was robbed by two unidentified youth near his residence in the centrally located posh Kutugovsky Prospekt area on Monday night.

The diplomat, Mr. Raminder Jassal, was accosted by two young men as he entered the lift in the diplomatic apartment block which houses several Indian families.

One of them threatened Mr. Jassal with a knife while the other asked him to hand over his wallet. After divesting Mr. Jassal of about \$140, the miscreants ran away."

A 62-year old Russian journalist told an Indian journalist S. Nihal Singh when requested to comment about their present "exciting and historic period." ("Moscow Diary," in *Sunday* dated 8-14 November, 1992 p. 18.)

"We have been and are being ruled by fools. For 70 years they distorted human values and destroyed our traditions. How do you think people who have suffered for 70 years can react to what has happened?"

The Russians generally feel that they will survive the present period of transition and a better future is awaiting them. Russia has resources. Their scientists and engineers have intelligence. They have defense equipments and MIG aeroplanes to sell and make money. Their technology is advanced. Their soldiers are still in the former East German areas and are likely to stay there till 1994. Russia is still a powerful nation, but a poor one. Their rouble is worthless. But the economy can be revamped within 3 or 4 years, some people think. We have to wait and see.

It depends how fast the economy is improved. How quick the farmers can produce grains and vegetables in plenty. The apple crop was in plenty this year. I could

see a lot of apples in market. Other fruits and vegetables too were available, but not enough, and not in affordable prices.

George Joseph I. F. S. is the Counsellor of the departments of Culture and Education in the Russian Embassy in Moscow. He belongs to 1976 batch. When Mini Mathew and her husband Mathew Kunnumkel visited me in Trichur they told me about their batch mate George Joseph who was selected to Indian Foreign Service (IFS) when my two friends got selected to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

I walked to George Joseph's office in the Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre across the Indian Embassy. I introduced myself as Mini's bishop. George Joseph is a Syrian Catholic Christian from Poonjar, Central Kerala. Although he had never heard of me before, our conversation commenced without any prior appointment or such formalities. His wife Rani was there and they invited me to his residence for breakfast next morning. Needless to say that it was a typical South Indian breakfast—Idlis, sambar and chutney.

Mr. Singh who was moving from Moscow to Odessa as the new Indian Consul there, had been invited for breakfast along with his wife. I was happy and proud of our delicious Kerala dishes as I saw Sardarji from Punjab enjoying the idlis of Kerala. We can cultivate friendship through our tasty dishes. I did my bit of friendship-building by sharing some jokes.

Almost ten days before my meeting, George Joseph's photo had appeared in India's leading regional newspaper,

Malayala Manorama. According to that article published on August 31, 1992 George Joseph made it clear that it was foolish to attempt to go to study in Russia at the moment. There are 8,000 Indian students in all the republics belonging to the former Soviet Union. Of this about 1,000 had joined the current year.

The stipend of 350 roubles was a paltry sum considering the crash of the Russian rouble. One cannot purchase ten meals with that monthly stipend. He told the newspaper interviewer that Indian embassy cannot render much assistance to the Indian students because some Indian students had reached Russia without the knowledge of the Indian Embassy in Moscow. Transfer of the Indian students from one republic to another republic too is a complicated process.

The telephone began to ring. George Joseph took the phone and answered fluently in the Russian tongue. It surprised me because he had been to Moscow only since two years. His previous postings had been in the Indian Embassies in Hong Kong, China, Zimbabwe and the U. S. A. I guess he had taken courses in Russian language earlier.

Dr. Roerich

The renowned Russian writer and painter Dr. Syvatoslav Roerich died on January 30, 1993 in his own estate near Bangalore, South India. His body was kept for public homage in the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishat. It was laid to rest on Feb 1, 1993 at the Roerich's sprawling and controversial 468-acre Tataguni where he had spent four decades of his life.

The proposal to fly his body to St. Petersburg, Roerich's birth place, was abandoned at the last moment, as it was difficult for his octogenarian wife Mrs. Devikarani to withstand the minus 15 degree temperature because of her old age and frail health. Devikarani is a film actress of yesteryear. The Russian Ambassador in India, Mr. Drukov, and other dignitaries were present at the final ceremonies on the outskirts of Bangalore.

Joint ventures are proposed in the Banking between the State Bank of India and Moscow. This will facilitate closer economic ties between India and Russia. To do business with Moscow through New York is a tedious and cumbersome process. The following news item that appeared in the "Business & Economy News" in the *Indian Currents*, Delhi dated January 25, 1993 is a welcome move.

"The State Bank of India is exploring the possibility of setting up a joint venture bank in Moscow. The Reserve Bank has already cleared the proposal in principle and a feasibility study will shortly be conducted by the SBI.

This move by the SBI is a part of the Government of India's efforts to open up new areas of cooperation with the Russian Federation as also other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. SBI is also looking for the scope of setting up such a joint venture bank in Ukraine."

The much awaited visit of the Russian President Boris Yeltsin to India in February 1993 was considered a

satisfactory one. Ninand D. Sheth, in the column *OPINION* in the *Indian Express* dated February 3, 1993, p. 10, writes as follows. Only the first and the third paragraphs are quoted below. *A Visit not so bad, after all.*

“The visit of Russian President Yeltsin was a useful one in that India got the best of a bad deal. Since the August 1991 coup in Moscow Indo-Russian relations had undergone a marked deterioration; if for nothing else the visit will be remembered for the goodwill it has generated.

The bargain on the rupee-rouble front is still to Russia's advantage, for the agreed value of the rouble does not adequately reflect its market value. Main things to be noted are that hereafter trade will not be governed by a protocol between the two countries, and goods and services to be traded will no longer be constrained by a specific list. This expands opportunities for India but the route for exploiting them lies not with Russia's trading Ministry but in the labyrinth of the Russian market.

After the visit of President Yeltsin to India, I would like to think that the relationship between India and the Russian federation will improve.

Although in Stalin's time Indian Prime Minister Nehru's name never appeared in Soviet newspapers, Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union in June 1955 made his name “almost a household word in the Soviet Union”, observes Ambassador K. P. S. Menon in his book *Many Worlds Revisited*. Nehru's *Autobiography* was translated into Russian. Perhaps the last of these translations to Russian is my book *Laugh with the Bishop*.

CHAPTER 8

Return from Moscow

The English Reporter of the World News of the Moscow Radio came to interview me before 4 p. m. on September 16, 1992. I had to leave for the airport before 5 p. m. Therefore she suggested that I should be as brief as possible on the various questions she asked. That remark automatically increased my speed. In half an hour I condensed what I should have spoken for 45 minutes. This programme was for the English radio stations of the Radio Moscow with a wider audience.

After the interview Professor Valentine Kirukhin took me to the airport, in his car. Prof. Konstantin Petrovich Matveyev accompanied me to the airport as he was my constant companion, interpreter and host throughout my six-day-visit to Moscow. I am grateful to these friends. Professor Valentine is not an Assyrian. Like Professor Valentine there are some non-Assyrians who are office-bearers of the Academy Assyria. Because Academy Assyria was founded by Professor K. P. Matveyev not just as a forum of the Assyrians in Russia to have a "social club", but to create Academic interest among the Russians to understand and appreciate the cultural heritage of their Assyrian neighbours.

At the airport as I said good bye to Professor K. P. Matveyev and entered the check-in area I noticed

some commotion at the entrance next to me. One soldier in uniform was stopping a man with a gun. I anticipated some serious problem. Then they stopped the act and was about to repeat it. My anxiety turned to a smile when I realised that it was the shooting of some movies.

“Problem, Problem” a young policeman told me looking at my visa at the exit counter. He looked at my ring and said something to his friend. Their idea was to get my ring as a bribe for letting me out of Moscow condoning the delay of a few hours after the visa had expired. I explained to him that I had checked Alitalia in Moscow and they had assured me that I could exit within 24 hours after the date stamped in the visa without getting an extension. He said, “Problem, Problem” again. I smiled. He smiled back. Language was a barrier between us. So he would not claim his bribe and I walked out to freedom to board the aircraft.

The Alitalia flight took off from Moscow at 7.25 p.m. on 16th September. It was about half an hour late. We reached Milan after flying for 3½ hours. Then more than half of the passengers left the aircraft, some to catch flights to various destinations. We remained on board to continue our journey to Rome. We were asked to be seated and not to disturb the workers who cleaned the toilets.

This gave me opportunity to read and write these words. I often wish that I could write instantly not only in the stops which are rare, but also while flying. The passenger sitting next to me was typing in his computer. By so doing they save their valuable time. If they are business men they save a lot of time if they act without

delay. One day I might own a computer and speed up my writing travelogues and other books.

I commenced reading the International *Herald Tribune* given to the passengers for in-flight reading. The article "Tilling the Valley of the Dry Bones" found on p.5 captured my quick attention. The article written by Edwin M. Yoder Jr for the Washington Post Writers Group has great appreciation of George Carey, whom he calls the new Archbishop of Canterbury, although he has been enthroned in this post for the past one year and four months.

The American writer of this newspaper article refers to what the Archbishop of Canterbury did in the late 1970s and early 1980s to reshape the St. Nicholas Church in Durham, England. He called it 'the Church in the market place'. It is a new variant of the very old Reformation idea, the priesthood of laity.

The article admits that it is not an easy task "to turn a comfortable institution 'inside out' or even to persuade laymen that their role is as vital as that of the clergy."

As I finished writing the above paragraphs we took off from Milan airport. My watch shows 12'o clock midnight. But the Italian time is only 10 p. m. We are behind 2 hours from Moscow and one hour ahead of London. I understand that one hour difference disappears when the winter time is in force in England. I guess our flying to Rome from Milan is about $\frac{3}{4}$ th of an hour. The hostesses are not seen in the aisles. They were busy serving dinner about two hours ago. Now they may be taking their well deserved rest or having their own dinner.

After overnight transit in Rome, I reached Bombay next night.

CONCLUSION

The Central Asian republics namely Kazakhstan, Kirghiztan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are planning to unite to form Turkestan. This is a challenge to the superiority of Russia in the Commonwealth of the Independent States dominated by Boris Yeltsin. The decisions of the summit of the Central Asian Republics in January 93 indicate the formation of a Turkestan.

Way back in December 1991 at the break-up of the Soviet Union, a proposal was mooted to form "Islamic republics" of the Central Asia to counter the unity of "Slavonic republics" dominated by Russia. Nevertheless, Russia, Ukraine and Balarus could not forge such a Slavonic unity. Now the Central Asian Republics are planning to protect their interests.

Two global information projects have commenced their activities. One is the construction of Central Asian Telecompany with headquarters in Tashkent. The second is the launching of the regional newspapers with headquarters in Alma Ata in Kazakhstan.

Tashkent is well known to the people of India, as Lal Bahadur Shastri, the short successor to the great Jawaharlal Nehru, died on January 11, 1966. The Indian Prime Minister had gone to Tashkent to have a summit with President Ayub Khan of Pakistan.

The forthcoming CIS summit scheduled to be held in Minsk (Byelo-russia) on January 22 may resolve some disputes. Perhaps we should wait to see the outcome, of the next summit of the leaders of the Central Asian republics to be held in Ashgabad, capital of Turkmenistan, scheduled for April this year.

The political pundits have begun to predict the possibility of the formation of a nation of 55 million in population which will be second only to Russia among the ex-Soviet countries. It will be slightly bigger than Ukraine which is the second in population among the C. I. S. republics. As reported in *Indian Express* dt January 11, 1993 this new republic will have :

“large reserves of oil and gas, developed infrastructure, solid industrial complex and even its own cosmodrome and a wholly solid military potential, inherited from the Soviet Union.”

The Muslims in the Central Asian Republics are not happy with Russians who are Christians. If Central Asian Republic is formed, they could work closer with Iran which is an Islamic nation. The name of the Uzbek President is Islam Karimov.

The resurgence of Islamic republics is likely to create many religious refugees. Many Christians in the proposed Turkestan will flee to Russia and other Christian countries. The Russians will retaliate by pushing out Muslims from the Russian territory.

It is like Pakistan and India at the time of partition in 1947. The Hindus ran for life from West Pakistan to India. Many Moslems found asylum in Pakistan. There

were streams of refugees flowing in both directions in Punjab. My friend in Moscow told me, "Mar Aprem, the present situation is already like your country in 1947." It can be worse as the recent developments indicate. It is a terrible thing to be persecuted in the land of one's birth in the name of religion.

India is interested to see whether Russia will write off India's debts like the USSR had done. The statement Vladimir Shibayev, Deputy Foreign Minister (Trade) of Russia, indicates that Russia will not write off India's debts. In the *Indian Express* dt January 12, 1993 we read :

In an interview to the official news agency 'ITAR-TASS' after his talks with Indian officials in Delhi, Mr. Shibayev however expresses Russia's readiness to ease terms for the repayment of credits granted by the erstwhile USSR to India "which were related to the revision of the rouble-rupee ratio" by "further softening" them.

On Tuesday, January 5, 1993 Russia reimposed price controls on key food items such as bread, milk, meat, butter, sugar, vodka, tea and such. However, prices of caviar, top-quality meat products, spirits excluding vodka, household appliances, cars, leather, clothes, jewellery and furs will remain outside State control. Those are not essential commodities for ordinary people.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signed this treaty. His predecessor Mr. Yegor Gaidar had liberalised prices a year earlier, exactly on January 2, 1992 in order

to establish a market economy in Russia. Unfortunately during one year the prices soared over 2000 times. The present decree envisages restricting profits on foodstuffs to 10 to 25 per cent. It cannot be predicted whether this partial price control would reverse the reform policies.

As I conclude my account of the latest political position in Russia in regard to the future prospects of Yeltsin survival as President of Russia, the following observations made the Reuter and published in the *Indian Express* dated February 23, 1993 is quoted below. It is not easy to predict whether Khasbulatov or Gorbachev will replace Yeltsin within a few months.

“NOVOSIBIRSK, Russia - Mr. Boris Yeltsin's grip on Russia is slipping as rival Ruslan Khasbulatov marshals conservative regional leaders in resisting the President's radical market reforms.

The two men clashed bitterly at the weekend Mr. Khasbulatov calling for a cutback in the President's powers while Mr. Yeltsin's camp urged removal of the parliamentary chairman. Conciliation talks have all but broken down amid the acrimony.

Time, however, appears to be on the side of Mr. Yeltsin's rival.

After my visit to Russia I read everything on Russia in newspapers. What is published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* dated January 2-8, 1993 draws our attention to the possible political change that is again likely to take place in Russia soon. In the *Astrofocus* on p. 43 Sushil Chaturvedi forecasts about Russia that there will be one more coup in 1993 to overthrow Yeltsin.



Qurbana at Assyrian Club in Ealing, London on 6 September 1992. Mar Aprem is reading Gospel in modern Syriac. Shamasha Skariah of Bagdad looks on.



Assyrians attending Qurbana. Seated in front row are Abu-George Dinkha James, Eshaya Chemmani, his sister-in law, her brother Anosh.



Breakfast after Qurbana. On the right is Malpano Abraham Nouro of Syria, well known Syriac scholar from the Orthodox Church.



Dr. Mar Apren giving his paper at the Department of Divinity, Cambridge University.



Outside St. Catherine College, Cambridge. Dr. Sebastin Brock of Oxford in the middle. On the left is Fr. Dr. Thomas Koonamackal, teaching at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary Kottayam.



In the studio of Moscow Radio, Recording of interview of Dr. Mar Aprem Sergie, Correspondent of the Moscow Radio on the left, Professor Konstantin Petrovich Matveyev, interpreter on the right.



Novodevichy monastery. The guide an Assyrian lady is seen between Dr. Mar Aprem and Sergiev of Moscow Radio.



Victor Siminov, of Georgia (on the right) visited Mar Aprem Metropolitan in Hotel YUGO SAPAT. An Assyrian from Moscow Joseph Zaya in the left.



Indian Ambassador Alfred Gonsalves receives
Mar Aprem at the Indian Embassy, Moscow



Archpriest Victor Petluchenko of Moscow Patriarchate receiving
Mar Aprem Metropolitan in the Department of External church
Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church.



George Joseph IFS, Director, Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Centre of Indian Embassy, Moscow is talking with Mar Aprem who is standing close to the bust of Nehru erected in the Cultural Centres' garden. Prof. Matyvev is next to Mr. George Joseph.



Prof Valery Tishkov, Minister of National Affairs, Russia, releases the Russian translation of *Laugh with the Bishop* written by Mar Aprem. Function is at Russian Academy of Science in Moscow.

Humour

- 29 Bishop's Jokes pp. 180, 1983
30 Laugh with the Bishop (Bombay) pp. 95, 1988
31 Laugh to Health (C. L. S. Madras) pp. 82, 1992
32 Holy Humour 1993

General

- 33 From Relief to Development:
A Profile of CASA pp. 282, 1979
34 Teach Yourself Aramaic pp. 152, 1981
35 Behold the Cross of Calvary pp. 152, 1987
36 Sermons from the Gospels Vol. I pp. 208, 1988
37 Sermons from the Gospels Vol. II pp. 138, 1990
38 The Nestorian Canon law pp. 1992

Malayalam

- 39 A Introduction to the History of the
Eastern Churches (Reprint, 1990) pp. 196, 1976
40 Christeeya Bakthi Ganangal pp. 124, 1980
41 സഭാചരിത്ര നിഘണ്ടു (ed.) pp. 424, 1985
42 ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ കാൽപ്പാടുകളിലൂടെ pp. 168, 1985

To be published (1993-94)

- 3 Mesopotamian Light
4 Assyrian Fathers
5 Syriac Manuscripts in India
6 Poems & Prayers
7 Advanced Aramaic
8 Voice of the East (Editorials)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The Most Rev. Dr. Mar Aprem (formerly George Mookken) was born in Trichur, Kerala, India, in June 1940. Educated in India, England and America, he specialised in the field of Church history. He was president of the Church history Association of India. Since 1968, he is head of the Church of the East in India with his headquarters in Trichur.

He studied at Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur, for B. D. degree. He also holds S. T. M. degree from New York M. Th., and D. Th., degrees of Serampore Senate. Of the 40 books he has written, most of them are in English. He was the recipient of the Literary Award of the Rotary Club of Trichur in 1990 and he was awarded the first Prize in a writing competition of I. S. P. C. K., Delhi. Mar Aprem was named 'Author of the Year 1990' at the National Christian Book Exhibition in Kottayam. He also received the 'Men of Achievement' Award of the international Biographical Centre Cambridge England, in 1984 and the 'Medal of Merit' of the Coptic Orthodox Cultural Centre, Venice, for his cultural and ecumenical achievements.